Part V
Discursive and Multi-level Perspectives

This part moves to a discursive and multi-level perspective on leadership and education within and between nation states combining educational leadership and curriculum work. More specifically, we feature Uljens and Rajakaltio's chapter that – considering our theorethical framework based on a non-affirmative understanding of educational influence Dietrich Benner and discursive institutionalism by Vivienn Schmidt. The study reconstructs the discursive dynamics regarding educational leadership as curriculum work at the nation-state level. The National Board of Education (NBE) in Finland operates rather independently between the Ministry of Education and municipal level reflecting a tradition of communicative discourse The study reveals how National Board of Education (NBE) utilises its degrees of freedom in the preparatory discursive processes of curriculum reform in relation to, on the one hand, intentions expressed by the political system and the Ministry of Education and, on the other hand, between NBE and schools and municipalities. Educational leadership as curriculum work on the nation state level mediates between different epistemic fields and value spheres.

Here curriculum work is an interruption in the Other's relation to himself/herself, other persons and the increasingly global world. This recognition-based Hegelian philosophy, updated by Axel Honneth along with modern education theory concepts, a non-affirmative perspective, and discursive institutionalism provide a general frame for understanding how the curriculum works as a pedagogical intervention of influence. The study is an example of our framework where educational leadership and curriculum work in the Finnish curriculum reform recognizes the subject as relationally free. Here influence does not mean support for implementation or development of extant ideas but rather an invitation to dialogue in order to transcend what is given. When curriculum work is seen as an invitational activity approach, general Finnish curriculum reform aims are proposed but translations to practice are not dictated or decided at the national level in advance. Importantly, in this chapter, the authors' position also acknowledges the leader/subject's own agency as a necessary requirement for the ability to transcend what is given. In sum, this chapter illustrates relationships between curriculum making as invitation to professional

self-activity and professional self-formation in which these relationships may create discursive spaces within and between leadership levels of a nation state.

The other chapter in this part takes a similar discursive perspective and considers educational leadership and curriculum work at the national and transnational levels. More specifically, Sivesind and Wahlstrom (this volume) re-conceptualize school leadership using curriculum theory as well as discursive institutionalism, taking as a point of departure both classical curriculum theory and institutional (societal and programmatic) arenas. Drawing on their own conceptual framework as well as findings from a comparative study of policy documents, Sivesind and Walhstrom explore the meaning of leadership education within and between leadership levels of Norway and Sweden. This chapter provides a well-argued example applying the concept of discursive institutionalism to curriculum theory in leadership at different levels and in different arenas with various coordinations of discourses, ideas, and actors. In conclusion, Sivesind and Wahlstrom argue that educational leadership can contribute to curriculum theorizing by emphasizing the role of leaders as actors in institutions that are embedded in particular but changing social, cultural, and political contexts. In their view, the meaning of leadership is deeply intertwined with ideological discourses on education that have traditionally been the subject of curriculum theorizing.

In combination, the chapters in this part offer important new applications for discursive institutionalism in educational settings with leadership as a multi-level project as well as a closer relationship between education theory, curriculum theorizing, and schools as societal institutions. Moreover, these studies explicitly illustrate the interplay among curriculum policies, societal aims, and educational relations within new forms of governance. In our research program, we bring all of these Parts or elements together toward a theory of educational leadership as curriculum work.

Chapter 13
National Curriculum Development as Educational Leadership: A Discursive and Non-affirmative Approach

Michael Uljens and Helena Rajakaltio

Abstract This chapter reconstructs the making and implementation of the new national curriculum in Finland (2012–2016). This research draws on non-affirmative theory of education and discursive institutionalism. The curriculum making process is perceived as a non-hierarchical educational leadership process where the National Board of Education (NBE) mediates and positions itself concerning (a) aims, (b) contents and (b) methods between transnational policies, national political decision making and policy work, various pressure and expert groups as well as school practice. The data consisted of interviews with three key actors within the Steering Committee of Curriculum Development (SCCD) and document analysis. The results demonstrate a shift towards stronger political steering, which in fact is a deviation from previous, trustbased policy regarding national education administration. In terms of discursive institutionalism the policy culture in Finland framing the curriculum leadership is still *coordinative* and dialogical, i.e. typical of a political consensus culture with broad governments, providing more autonomy for the educational administration. Second, curricular *aims* in the New Curriculum from 2016 reflect a movement towards a *competence* based curriculum, i.e. a more performative educational ideal is supported. The key competencies promoted are now similar to those promoted by the OECD since 2006. Third, a collaborative and development oriented professional culture around teaching *methods* is strengthened. Learning of the *contents* should now promote the development of more general key competencies. There are no indications of that the school system in Finland would be leaving a strong subject centered curriculum and evaluation.

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Introduction

This chapter investigates the national curriculum process in Finland (2012–2016). In the first half of the article features of a theoretical framework for curriculum work as educational leadership is outlined. The position draws on non-affirmative theory of education and Bildung as well as discursive institutionalism from political sciences. The second half of the chapter investigates the curriculum making process as a non-hierarchical top-down and bottom-up educational leadership process where the National Board of Education (NBE) mediates between political decision making, pressure groups and school practice. This mediation falls into two parts. The first relation, between National Board of Education and Ministry of Education and Culture, concern the establishment of new Decrees and decisions on allocation of time over school subjects. These decrees create a foundation for the later curriculum making process. The second relation, that between the National board of Education (NBE) and practitioners is based on document analysis. Concerning the curriculum itself the results point out changes concerning aims, contents and methods. The curricular aims in Core Curriculum in Finland 2016 partially reflect a movement towards a competence oriented curriculum. A collaborative and development oriented culture around teaching methods is emphasized. The subject-matter itself is more clearly seen as a vehicle for Bildung purposes.

Questions and Design The aim of this chapter is to investigate the national core curriculum reform (National Board of Education 2014) as a curriculum leadership process at a national level. The whole process is called Curriculum reform 2016. The official curriculum making process is seen as a non-hierarchical top-down and bottom-up educational leadership process where the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) mediates between transnational and national political decision-making, pressure groups, stakeholders and school practice (Robertson 2006, 2007). The interaction between these levels is considered non-hierarchal as, for example, FNBE, assigned by the Ministry (politics), prepares the ground work for the Decrees to decided upon by the Ministry. As political powers then have decided upon the aims and other questions the curriculum construction process led by FNBE may start. This is, simplified, the shape and form of the non-hierarchical procedure – administration prepares for Decrees, Decrees direct the work of the administration, the administration (FNBE) approves the curriculum.

More precisely the two-level design of this analysis is divided between studying, first, the vertical dialogue and process between the FNBE and the Ministry of Education and Government, and, second, vertical dynamic relations between FNBE and stake holders, pressure groups and practitioners. While at the first level, i.e. between FNBE and the Ministry, we study the *generative process* through which the Decrees are created that later direct the later curriculum constructing process, while the second level tries to catch the dynamics of how FNBE cooperate with the field of practitioners in *implementing the curriculum*. It is in this sense we see FNBE demonstrating educational leadership as a mediating instance between politics and practice. In this mediating and translating process FNBE is provided with degrees of freedom, a relative independence, to make decisions.

Third, the curriculum itself is analyzed according to the general part of the curriculum. Finally some development trajectories are described in the Finnish comprehensive school with relevance for the study.

Our three empirical research questions are:

1. How may the recent tradition of revision processes of the national core curriculum in Finland be described?
2. What features may be identified in the discursive dynamics between FNBE and the Ministry of Education (Government) regarding the preparation of Decrees regulating later curriculum construction?
3. How was the curriculum development process designed with respect to cooperation between FNBE, municipalities and schools?

The first question is answered through a reconstruction of recent developments concerning curriculum work in Finland. The answer on this question forms the starting point for the analysis of the second and third research questions.

The data analyzed questions 2 and 3 consist of laws, decrees and other documents regulating the curriculum process. The main data sources are the Government Decree (Government Decree 422/2012) passed in June 2012 and the National core curriculum passed in November 2014 (National Board of Education 2014) which will be implemented in August 2016. In addition we analyze official policy documents, plans, public process descriptions and information produced by the national committee, and interviews with education officials at the national level. Furthermore we have carried out interviews with core officials at the FNBE responsible for leading the curriculum construction process the past 5 years. The interviews were carried out by both of us being present as interviewers at all three occasions. The sessions lasted around 2 h each, which were transcribed. In this study we utilize understandings that we developed during the interviews.

Given that curriculum development forms a part of a more general process concerning school development a number of significant other parallel decisions concerning school governance are pointed out. Such initiatives may be considered as additional sources of information to be interpreted in order to gain a more coherent picture. These other school governance initiatives have to do with the renewal of the evaluation system, new developmental plans expected to be used by the schools, financial models, and national reform work on principal education. Furthermore in the present curriculum reform several national core curricula were drawn up simultaneously i.e. a national core curriculum for pre-primary education, a core curriculum for general upper secondary education and a core for curriculum basic education in arts, as well as the curricula for preparatory education for immigrants.

Theoretical Framework

To pursue these aims we will, first, outline features of a theoretical platform for how 'leadership as curriculum development' may be approached. To this end we describe a non-affirmative and discursive educational leadership approach (Uljens 2015;

Uljens and Ylimaki 2015). This position draws on different but related contributions considered valuable, but which alone are perceived limited for a comprehensive understanding of curriculum reform at the national level. These are non-affirmative theory of education general education (Benner 1991; Uljens 2002), Didaktik (Uljens 1997), research on curriculum leadership (Ylimaki 2011), as well as discursive institutionalism (Schmidt 2008). The framework to be described is related to but not the same as intersubjective and recognition based social philosophy (Honneth 1995) in a critical Bildung tradition (Benner and English 2004). The position assumes individual agency as discursively embedded leadership practice. Educational leadership as professional activity include an interpersonal moral relation, carried out in historically developed societal institutions framed by a policy context, ideologies and occurring within a larger cultural historical tradition (Rajakaltio 2011; Uljens and Ylimaki 2015). An additional framing of the empirical analysis consist of a structural model describing curriculum decentralisation and recentralisation as well as externalisation of evaluation, originally based on a reflective theory of school didactics.

There are many reasons for viewing curriculum work at the nation state level as educational leadership. By turning our attention to 'curriculum work as educational leadership' we expect being able to highlight some of the mechanisms through which the political ideas, initiatives and positions transforms into a 'pedagogical agenda' offered to practitioners. Curriculum is thus both a political, pedagogical and practical challenge. We are interested in how this curricular agenda is initiated, established, adapted, enacted, defended and negotiated on different levels, however, without forgetting to include key actors on the national level. How do those in charge for large scale education reforms act as educational leaders? How do they mediate between political interests, pressure groups, academic research and practitioners' interests? To lead a national reform process is also a huge organizational and practical undertaking. How, and why, is the process, including so many actors, organized as it is?

In demonstrating such a processual and activity oriented focus we connect to research traditions studying the initiation, implementation and institutionalisation of curriculum (Hopmann 2003; Goodlad 1979; Lundgren 1989; Phillips and Hawthorne 1978). Following Erich Weniger's (1975) view curriculum making is a complex practical and political problem, where education as a science can contribute but cannot have or be given the responsibility for the process. As Künzli (2013) points out there is no traditional truth criteria to be applied for evaluating the process, rather "situative and historic appropriateness". Neither is the process predictable or possible to control. In many respects Schwab's (1978) position is reminiscent of Wenigers.

Curriculum making is about construing a platform or frame not only for teaching but also for subsequent leadership of the educational system. We assume that the curriculum may be viewed as a programmatic interruption in the practitioner's way of understanding herself and carrying out one's professional tasks. Here we make use of Foucault's view of politics as an invitation to self-formation while ethics is taken to refer the individual's response, how the individual chooses to relate to herself. An interruption of this kind is an intervention in the Other's relation to herself,

other persons and the world (Honneth 2003). Such a recognition based Hegelian philosophy provides a general frame for understanding how the curriculum itself, as well the construction process, operates, and is used, as a pedagogical intervention in order to influence. Here *influence* does not mean implementation of readymade ideas but an invitation to a dialogue. In our view, in doing so educational leadership as curriculum work recognizes the subject as radically free as this makes her able to transcend what is given. But the position also acknowledges the necessity of the subject's own agency as a necessary requirement for transcending a given state. The effect of curriculum development activity is, obviously, also in the hands of the receivers enacting given intentions.

In line with discursive and non-affirmative leadership theory (Uljens and Ylimaki 2015) curriculum making discourse is considered as an invitation to *self-activity and self-formation* create spaces within and between institutionalized levels. Consequently, also national education leaders' ways, patterns or cultures of inviting practitioners, principals and teachers, in developmental work around the curriculum can be built upon a recognition based view of intersubjectivity and subjectivity in the way Honneth has suggested.

Discursive Institutionalism Not only does a curriculum form a platform for educational leadership practice. Also the very making of the curriculum is a kind of leadership. In curriculum making there is typically a complex interaction occurring between politics and the administration. One result of this process, e.g. law and decrees, form the point of departure for the actual working out the curriculum. In this study we limit ourselves to the process starting when the laws and decrees are accepted. Yet, as a curriculum is a part of a more general ideological and politically informed pedagogical policy agenda (Weniger 1975; Schwab 1978; Apple 1996), 'educational leadership as curriculum making' cannot be disconnected from these politically agreed general aims of education and must be analysed in relation to them, which will be done. In essence we see national authorities working with the making of curriculum as mediating between politics and educational practice. We also make the assumption that how this national educational leadership process of curriculum making is and may be carried out is dependent on the political culture of each country. Although the curriculum is central to both Didaktik and curriculum theory the policy culture of leadership is often not thematized, which is something that discursive educational leadership expands towards.

We argue that analyzing curriculum making as educational leadership may utilize the concepts of 'discourse' and 'ideas', as developed by Schmidt (2008) in discursive institutionalism. Given that "ideas are the substantive contents of discourse", discourse is "the interactive process of conveying ideas" (Schmidt 2008). Discursive institutionalism takes its point of departure in *normative* and *cognitive* ideas on a *philosophy, policy and program* level:

> Cognitive ideas speak to how …policies offer solutions to the problems at hand, how … programs define the problems to be solved and identify the methods by which to solve them, and how both policies and programs mesh with the deeper core of … principles and norms of relevant scientific disciplines or technical practices. Normative ideas instead

attach values to political action and serve to legitimate the policies in a program through reference to their appropriateness… Normative ideas speak to how … policies meet the aspirations and ideals of the general public and how … programs as well as … policies resonate with a deeper core of … principles and norms of public life, whether the newly emerging values of a society or the long-standing ones in the societal repertoire. (Schmidt 2008, 307)

These ideas are considered to manifest themselves in coordinative and communicative discourses. Coordinative discourses mainly occur among policy makers, and communicative discourses occur between policy making and the public. Schmidt points out that different nation states demonstrate different polities or political cultures. Coordinative cultures are frequent in simple or consensus oriented polities and are featured by broad policy preparing procedures and practices widely including different policy actors. Communicative polities in turn typically are frequent in nation states dominated by either left or right wing governments or complex polities. In these last policies political work is more narrowly based, i.e. led by the government parties, typically resulting in a so called communicative culture, i.e. where politicians have to market decisions made, as no broad coalitions necessarily back them up.

First, it is obvious that curriculum making work around both cognitive and normative ideas reflected in the aims and contents of education. We see the meaning of these ideas as evolving due to the discursive processes in relation to given a context at different levels – a philosophical, policy and program level. In this perspective a discursive approach to educational leadership also may reveal how processes and dynamics between actors and levels are related to how these substantive ideas are reconstructed.

Non-affirmative and Discursive Theory of Educational Leadership Despite obvious merits of a politological approach like discursive institutionalism only limited attention is directed to the *pedagogical* dimension of these discourses. We see a need to overcome this limitation of discursive institutionalism in understanding educational leadership. How may this be done?

In line with non-affirmative leadership theory (Uljens 2015; Uljens and Ylimaki 2015) we make use of some fundamental theoretical categories in non-affirmative education theory (Benner 1991). A first assumption is to adopt a *non-hierarchical* view of how societal forms of practice are related (Gruber 1979). This means that various forms of societal practices like education, politics, law and economy are not sub- or super-ordinated in relation to each other. For example, on the one hand politicians decide about new laws, on the other politics is regulated by law. Education is politically directed, but in such a way that an educated individual can change future politics. In this sense education is not limited to socialization into given norms but supports the individuals growth into a deliberating subject (Englund 1996) able to transcend what is given.

Given the above we accept the view of curriculum making as a 'complicated conversation' (Pinar 2011) in a procedural and deliberative democracy. Curriculum making is a contingent processes where tradition, political and moral will in addi-

tion to rational reason operate in relation to self-formation. Regarding the influence of (political) will and (rational) reflection, our assumption is that in a consensus oriented political culture, like Finland, more room is left for rational deliberation in curriculum work and also for teacher autonomy. This gets support from Schmidt (2008) who assumes that simple polities, i.e. consensus cultures, are featured by coordinative rather than a communicative discourse. Consequently, in systems following a stronger political e.g. left-right wing culture we would expect that the role of the administration is more executive and managerial directed by politics, while being less autonomous and balancing between political, academic and practical interests. In many countries also the central administrators are replaced as the result of elections, seldom so in Finland. In comparison a culture of trust in professional deliberation rather than control may partly be explained by this political culture in Finland (Uljens and Nyman 2013).

In our view curriculum may be seen as an invitation to practitioners to reflect on their pedagogical work. A curriculum may be seen as a "summons" to self-reflection and activity (Benner 1991). In summoning it is always assumed that those being summoned have a will of their own. Fundamentally, the idea of influencing somebody by summoning recognizes the individual's transcendental freedom and present empirical condition. The practitioner's self-realization would thus mean that the individual relates to a curriculum as to an "interrupting" summons, an invitational offering. But the process of self-realization is completed only through the indivual's own activity. Here we refer to the concept of *Bildsamkeit*, initiated by J. G. Fichte and carried further by Hegel, Herbart and Schleiermacher and subsequently by e.g. Dewey, Mead and Vygotsky, in different versions, though the root is the same.

In addition we want to emphasize that educational leadership in the form of curriculum implementation, demonstrate a *paradoxical* relation to praxis. How? Let us give an example. Although the aims, content or methods proposed in the curriculum may be new the practitioners are *treated* as if they would understand these new ideas and as if they were capable of transforming their praxis, even if they, by definition, not necessarily are *yet* able of doing this. The paradox consists in that the practitioners are approached as if they *already* were able to do what they are expected to *become* able of doing. Yet, only by being approached in this way, they may transcend their current praxis (Benner 1991; Uljens 2002), i.e. the curriculum is an invitational disruption.

The previously described non-hierarchical relation between societal forms of practice means then that, on the previous grounds, a simple top-down implementation process in launching new curricula is not possible. The validity of the modern version of the pedagogical paradox, i.e. to be recognized as a reflecting and free individual although it is through this very recognizing agency of the Other that one may become a culturally free and reflecting individual, is not limited to the intersubjective relation in a teaching-studying-learning process in the classroom, but is also relevant in describing educational leadership at other levels. We can see that educational leadership on a national level is then not only about managing educational institutions or supporting the growth of professional competence but includes a pedagogical dimension.

From a *discursive curriculum leadership* perspective we turn our attention to the normative and cognitive ideas behind these intentional "disturbances" as well as the shapes they take in different political, cultural and administrative systems – as intentions, interpretations and negotiations. The task would thus be to try to grasp the dynamics in a given cultural, historical, political, institutional and societal context. In fact, the very change from an old public administration (OPA) model to a new public management (NPM) model has reminded us how strongly any governance model directly, and mostly indirectly, affect the individual's self-formation and identity (Pinar 2011). In this respect we see soft-governance as a 'politics' inviting or even forcing the subject to new forms of self-formation (Foucault). Utilizing this insight it is also possible to study the intentions of 'normalisation' and creation of cultural coherence by curricular work.

Adopting a non-hierarchical view a view has consequences for how we consider educational administration in a democracy to operate: not only teachers but also education leaders at different levels are both allowed and assumed to make use of degrees freedom given. The system builds upon the previously mentioned paradox. Curriculum making cannot on these grounds be unconditionally sub-ordinate even to those very laws and decrees directing the process of making the curriculum as the curriculum in any western democracy prepares the younger generation to become citizens to participate in changing the very laws.

Deliberative Approaches and Discursive Educational Leadership Theory Given the above focus on recognition of individual and professional agency we see it fruitful also to relate to critical theory of social action inspired by Habermas to help us reflect upon educational leadership in curriculum making. Following a hegelian tradition emphasizing intersubjective legitimation of values and knowledge, Habermas' ideal principles for communication may be used as a reference point in investigating how educational leadership as curriculum making in a democratic society works. This is in coherence with was previously said about discursive institutionalism and educational leadership theory. Communicative action is here considered to refer to a process where participants may act in their own interests but harmonized with interests of others, thus pointed at the centrality of negotiation (Englund 1996). The deliberational aspect also point at that self-formation (Bildung) does not occur without a reference to an *Other*, on the contrary. We see this kind of communicative action as being about will formation as well as personal and cultural identity, but also about supporting rational reflection in valuing an orientation towards being comprehensible and truthful, sincere (honest), sensitive for others interests and also critical with respect to authorities (Habermas 1987). A consensual political tradition, like the one in Finland, offers, so we believe, more degrees of freedom for such a rational dialogue. A *discourse ethical* approach thus pay attention to what kinds of procedural communicative dialogues are carried out (Roth 2000). In this study the education officials' work is framed by political legislation but the political decisions do not transform into practices by themselves. Policies are enacted on several levels of the educational system (Ball et al. 2011), and involves moral, political and rational agency (Carleheden 2006).

Conceptually then, curriculum making as educational leadership is here understood as a *mediational* process operating between on the one hand *values* and, on the other, various *epistemologies*. By *epistemologies* is referred to that decision making in educational leadership is related to knowledge of e.g. teaching practices, culture, students, law, financial systems, technology, communication, demographics, working life and management. By *values* is referred to both ethical and political questions. Educational leadership within the administration on the school, municipal, state and transnational level thus partly consist of making use of the degrees of freedom offered in this critical-hermeneutic process. In this process policies are both constructed and enacted.

Educational leadership as curriculum work is also mediational in other respects. Leadership is horizontally distributed over professional actors both within and between institutions (cf. policy borrowing). Educational leadership is also vertically distributed between e.g. transnational level, the state, municipal level and the school level. We can identify a first, second, third and fourth order of educational leadership where the object of what is led varies. Teachers' leading students' *study* activities is first order leadership. Principals leading teachers' professional *teaching* activities is second order leadership. Education officials (eg. superintendents) leading *principals' leadership* activities is third order leadership. While national education authorities leading the previous activities is called fourth order educational leadership. In this study we consciously delimit ourselves to a national level, although we fully accept that transnational interests clearly influence the national curriculum process in many ways (Frontini 2009).

A final argument for viewing curriculum work as educational leadership is that empirical and theoretical curriculum *research* often, but not entirely, has overseen educational leadership. A similar limitation holds true for the Didaktik tradition. Leadership research in turn has typically not related itself to curriculum making or theory (Uljens and Ylimaki 2015). Thus to consider *curriculum work as discursive educational leadership* may point at new openings.

Results

The Policy Culture Regarding the Revision Process of the National Core Curriculum in Finland The *curricular reform work* in Finland is traditionally carried out as a process of systemic educational leadership from the top of the administration to the single school. The national core curriculum is a national regulation in compliance with which the local curricula are designed. The purpose of the national core curriculum is to support and steer the work in schools and to promote equality and the underlying values of basic education as democracy, cultural diversity as a richness and sustainability as a way of living. Education providers, most commonly municipalities, are fairly autonomous in practicing local educational policy due to their own development strategies and draw up their own local curricula based on the national core curricula. They are responsible for the preparation

and development of the local curriculum as well for practical teaching arrangements and the quality of its education. Local authorities has the right to choose whether there will be a common local school curriculum or if some schools will set up a curriculum together or if there will be school specific curricula. They determine how much autonomy is passed on to schools (National Board of Education 2012). The relation between state and the municipalities has changed since the 1990s. The municipalities are more self-governing than before (The Local Government Act 365/1995). But because of financial straits some municipalities have cut their resources and a segregation process can be noticed due to various economic and social structures in different municipalities (Nakari and Sjöblom 2009).

A renewal of the National Core Curriculum for basic education in Finland has so far been carried out about every tenth year (1970, 1985, 1994, 2004) although some important amendments in the legislation have been accomplished in the years between. The Basic Act from late 1990s (Basic Education Act 628/1998) still applies. The present national core curriculum issued in 2004 is based on the Act 1998, which stated the single-structure basic education (grades 1–9) by abolishing the traditional (administrative) division between primary and lower secondary schools (National Board of Education 2004). The single-structure school is based on the principle of continuity. The Basic Education Act 1998 pointed out individualization as a pervasive principle, which responds to societal orientation towards neoliberal individualism. According to the Act every pupil has the right to receive tuition corresponding to his/her talents and prerequisites. In the national core curriculum 2004 this individualistic orientation was embedded in the development of the 9–11 years single-structure basic education as the idea of individual learning pathways and devoted attention to *learning plans* which could be set up for every pupil as it was stated.

The individualistic view – combined with a diagnostic culture in defining special needs – had led to an explosion of enrollments into special student status. In 2010 significant changes were made in the administration guidelines for special education, in the legislation and in the national core curriculum 2004 which affirmed the basic principles: early identification of risks and a three-step-support system for inclusive education. The supplementary to the national core curriculum had a strong emphasis on diversity and equality in all aspects; sex, age, ethnicity and nationality, language, religion, conviction, opinion, health and disability. The changes call for a safe and collaborative school community, which enhances all pupil's well-being, differentiation, cooperation and meaningful learning (National Board of Education 2010). These changes and amendments are embedded in the national core curriculum 2014 (National Board of Education 2014).

The national education policy in Finland is promoting an ideology of inclusion. The change emphasizes recognition of diversity and differences to labeling and diagnosing students and to prevent exclusion by early identification of risks and by offering supportive inclusive practices. The education provider is obliged to ensure that the pupils' right to receive support is implemented in practice. The purpose of the reform is to reinforce the learning support mechanisms for all *students*. The issue of developing inclusive forms of education has led to increased *challenges* at

school level in curriculum development and *everyday practices*, and teachers struggle to respond to the actual *needs* of a *diverse student population.* The need of collaboration among teachers and welfare staff is facing a cultural shift in the traditionally individualistic work culture into a more collaborative culture (Rajakaltio and Mäkinen 2013). The need of a change of school culture as a community was identified in the government decree (Government Decree 422/2012) and is promoted in the national core curriculum 2014.

The principle of *neighbourhood school* was launched and included in the Basic Education Act 1998 as well. According to this principle every child has got the right to attend a school closest to her/his home. The school may take pupils outside the catchment area if there are vacant places. In fact local authorities (municipalities) have interpreted and modified this principle in various ways and research findings show that parental choice occurs in bigger towns which are facing a segregation process in schools (Varjo and Kalalahti 2011; Seppänen et al. 2015).

The Finnish curriculum tradition has been described as a kind of a hybrid model, a nationally contested mix between Anglo-American curriculum and German Scandinavian Bildung (Autio 2013). The curriculum tradition with Ralph Tyler's Rationale as its icon exemplifies a technical-rational view on curriculum as an organizational framework, which positions the teacher as a technician, whose task is to implement the curriculum, written as a manual. This is the case in many countries where education and curriculum work is based on accountability and standardization. In the Finnish way of mixing the curriculum traditions teachers are positioned as autonomous, intellectual actors in the reform work of the school. Curriculum is seen both as an organizational and intellectual centerpiece of education (Autio 2013). In the Finnish curriculum educational leadership is leadership in both of these fields. It is also possible to identify various positions within the Finnish curriculum leadership tradition over the past 40 years, i.e. during the era of the 9-year comprehensive school system (1972–).

In Fig. 13.1 major changes during the past 40 years in educational policy, leadership and administration are pointed out. The model is based on a reflective model of Didaktik for schools. The main dimensions in the figure are (a) curriculum work as the vertical axis describing degrees of centralization and decentralization and (b) evaluation of education as the horisontal axis pointing at to what extent evaluation is controlled internally by teachers or externally by other interests. Using these simple distinctions we are able to identify four positions that quite well describe educational policy in Finland concerning curriculum work and evaluation procedures.

First, in Finland the 1972 curriculum is generally considered a product of the heyday of directing schools with laws, inspection and curricula (Position 1: Management by objectives and rules). Here teachers were responsible for evaluating students' learning achievement. The movement from position 1 to position 2 indicate a two step decentralization of curricular work in 1980s and then in the 1990s. From the late 1970s, Finland started to move from a traditional administration-centred to a qualification-oriented and decentralized way of governing schools. Parallel to decentralization of curriculum work, teachers' vocation was stepwise being professionalized by *academiation*. Together positions 1 and 2 reflect the edu-

Positions and Changes in
Educational Leadership Policy 1972-2012 in Finland
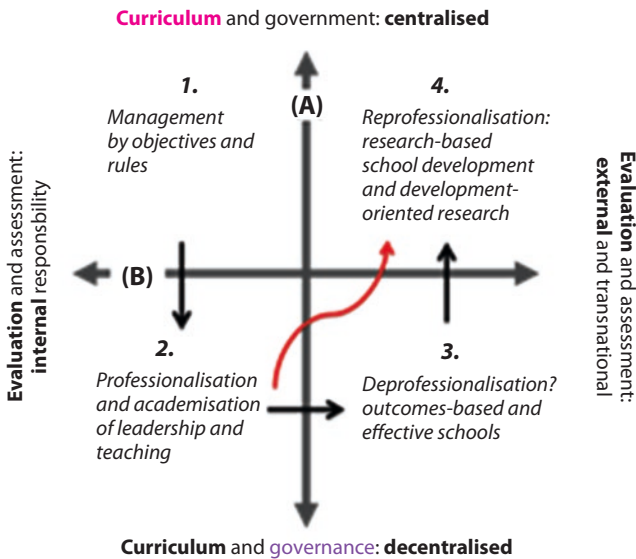
Curriculum and government: **centralised**

Fig. 13.1 A reconstruction of how educational leadership as curriculum work and evaluation is carried out during different periods

cational policy of the social democratic welfare state. Internationally the educational mentality of the past two decades has to a growing extent reflected a stronger discourse on excellence, efficiency, productivity, competition, internationalization, increased individual freedom and responsibility as well as deregulation in all societal areas. This change is indicated by an arrow from position 2 to position 3 indicating the establishment of regime of performative accountability in public administration. Generally, position 3 demonstrates that evaluation as a tool traditionally used by teachers to control students was turned into a tool for controlling teaching. However, a unique feature of Finnish education policy after 1989 is that a testing culture has to this day not been developed, other than those national exams having existed for over 100 years in upper secondary schools. National authorities have not even developed instruments for following up each and every school's results. Instead survey methods are applied to monitor the state of art in Finnish schools. The final movement, to position 4, is a stronger recentralization of curriculum meaning that in the 2004 national curriculum a much stronger grip was taken concerning the aims content. We return in the discussion to the ongoing development in Finland.

Curriculum Leadership as a Dynamics Between FNBE and the Ministry According to the design and research questions of this study we first intend to investigate the dynamics between FNBE and the Ministry of Education.

We aim at a reconstruction of the process leading up the decisions framing the later curriculum construction process. Consequently our study begins by investigating the first step in the national core curriculum process, which is to formulate the Government Decrees that specify the goals of education and the distribution of lesson hours. In principle, these Decrees are expected to reflect the government program and the Ministry's Development Plan for Education and Research (Ministry of Education and Culture 2012a).

The allocation of time to be used for teaching the school subjects is only a seemingly small question. In reality it has been fraught with conflicts. It is a battleground for different stakeholders according to their interests in different subjects. This was also the case in the initial phase of the planning process of the curriculum reform 2016.

What steps and tensions may then be identified in this process? In the spring of 2009 the Ministry of Education appointed a committee on renewal of national aims and distribution of lesson hours (Ministry of Education 2010). The committee consisted of fifteen members who represented political parties and both labor and employers' organizations and the parental union. Both the chairman and the secretary represented the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE). The Director General of FNBE leading the preparatory committee was Timo Lankinen, representing right-wing party *Kansallinen Kokoomus* (National Coalition Party-NCP) appointed in 2008 for 5 years. The committee was expected to deliver a report in June 2010.

The central role of FNBE in this process follows existing practices and regulations. The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) as the executive body of authority is responsible for designing the national core curriculum, approving it and implementing it as well as other policy aims. The national core curriculum has to be formulated pursuant to the Basic Education Act and Decree (Basic Education Act 628/1998; Basic Education Decree 852/1998) and Government Decree, specifying *the goals of education* and the *distribution of lesson hours among school subjects* (Government Decree 422/2012). The Government Decree directs further the overall *time allocation* by defining the minimum number of lessons allocated to core subjects in basic education. In essence, this national administrative agency (FNBE) was then leading the preparatory work for the later Decrees to be decided upon. This preparatory work resulted in a report (proposition) that demonstrate the conclusions drawn by the committee (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010). Already now it is obvious for the reader how central the role of FNBE was. In fact, the design of this curriculum construction process in Finland demonstrates an institutionalized trust regarding the national administration. However, it should be observed that this tradition was connected to a strong tradition of public civil servants in the state administration. Contrary to most other European countries in Finland central leaders of institutions where not replaced after elections but survived new governments. This tradition was stepwise broken during the past decade. For example the Director General for FNBE was appointed for 5 years at a time.

In the report, or proposition, the committee examined changes in the national and international operational environments that had to be taken account for in the

renewal of basic education for the future. According to this preparation work some of the transnational trends, as the OECD policy documents discussing key competences, had an influence in shaping the proposition. The proposition argued in favour of several profound developments, which should be taken into consideration in the subsequent curricular planning work. The proposition classified the objectives for citizens' future skills into five groups of competences an individual is expected to need in a future society: (1) Thinking skills, (2) Ways of working and interaction, (3) Crafts and expressive skills, (4) Participation and initiative and (5) Self-awareness and personal responsibility. Further the proposition headed at a significant increase concerning students' individual choices regarding subjects. The proposal argued for a curriculum divided between compulsory and optional subjects. Six multi-disciplinary subject groups were suggested to be mandatory consisting of different subjects. The optionality was located within these multi-disciplinary groups. The multi-disciplinary subject groups were: Language and interaction, Mathematics, Environment, Science and technology, Individual, enterprise and society, Arts and craft as well as Health and personal functionality.

Optionality may be connected to distribution of lesson hours. The committee proposed a considerable increase of lesson hours reserved for optional subjects for all grades. Typically optionality increases the higher up in the school system pupils move. Now the committee proposed increased optionality even for pupils in the lower grades. The group thought there should be 13 weekly optional lesson hours per year in grades 3–6 and 21 weekly optional lesson hours per year in grades 7–9.

Two new subjects were introduced: drama and ethics. By supporting Drama the aim was to strengthen a comprehensive approach to art education in the multi-disciplinary group of Arts and crafts. Ethics was seen to reinforce the basic values of the Finnish society within the subject group 'Individual, enterprise and society'.

Foreign language education and second national language studies were diversified and introduced earlier than before. The group proposed also that the minimum amount of annual number of pupil's weekly lessons hours should be increased by 4 h.

The radical proposition included many controversial elements reflected by a lively political debate during the whole process, in public and in the media. The committee could not agree upon the above proposal and no unified view was put forth. Six group members out of 15 made objections to the proposition.

In this preparatory political phase of the curricular work political tensions in the group were clearly visible. The Social Democrats, the Greens and the Center parties as well as both labor and employer organizations, made objections to the proposition for several reasons. One of the main argument against the proposition was related to the costs of the reform. There was a fear of increasing inequality between the municipalities because of their different financial situations. A second objection, also related to equality, was that the substantial addition of lesson hours for optional subjects would not in practice increase the pupils' freedom of choice as pupils' choices are systematically connected to families' social background. Several studies over the years have shown that the students' socio-cultural and economic status significantly influences pupil's school choices (Seppänen et al. 2015). The multi-disciplinary subject groups were criticized to abolish the subject-based curriculum,

e.g. by the teacher union. One of the objections the green party made was that the proposition did not strengthen the education in arts and craft. The center party made an objection to the formulation of the subject group Individual, enterprise and society and suggested a formulation that include *Humanity* instead of *Individual*. The social democrats lambasted the expert group's way of working on a too tight schedule with no space for discussions (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010). The chair represented the right-wing party as did the Minister.

In the autumn of 2010 the government refuted the proposition. As previously observed the work was led by a Director General representing a right-wing party appointed for 5 years, obviously making political steering of FNBE easier. The report was put forth despite many objections. In addition there was a change of government due to elections and a new Minister, now representing social democrats instead of the right wing party, was elected. Extensive public and political debate was carried out from the publication of the report until Spring the next year, 2011.

In August 2011 the Ministry of Education and Culture appointed a second expert group with the task of preparing a new foundation for the curriculum work to come. This second committee consisted only of governmental officials from the Ministry who worked out the second proposal behind closed doors. FNBE, that previously and traditionally had a key role in the process was locked out from this process. The new committee took all criticism into account and developed a proposal made public in February 2012 (Ministry of Education and Culture 2012b). This time the proposal was, not unexpected, much more in line with social democratic policies than the first one. The new Government Decree (422/2012) was accepted in June 2012.

What about the result? Comparing the Government Decree (422/2012) there were no significant changes compared to the previous one from 2001, but a greater emphasis was put on school as a community (Government Decree 1435/2001; Uljens and Rajakaltio 2015). The educational principles are fundamentally moral. The Government Decree contains of three sections with several objectives. The value building national goals to be considered in preparing the National Core Curriculum are as follows: *Growth as human being and membership in society, Requisite knowledge and skills and Promotion of knowledge and ability, equality and lifelong learning.* These goals steer also the preparation of the local curriculum and the work at school. At this level the objectives are rather open and there was a need of an interpretation as the starting point for the curricular reform process. The national goals are briefly summarized as follows.

The section two *Growth as human being and membership in society* presupposes that basic education should support pupils to become active and ethically responsible citizens, who are promoting sustainable development. Education promotes knowledge and understanding of cultures, ideological, philosophical and religious traditions. The decree highlights respect for human rights, the democratic values of Finnish society, including equity and equality.

The objectives according to section three *Requisite knowledge and skills* are related to education as laying a foundation on which pupils can build extensive general knowledge and abilities and broaden their world view and of oneself. The emphasis in this section is on the individual pupils' health, welfare and safety and

competence in taking care of oneself and managing daily life. The objective is furthermore to foster the competencies required in working life and entrepreneurship, e.g. ICT skills. The decree states that the education must be based on scientific knowledge.

The section four *Promotion of knowledge and ability, equality and lifelong learning* is directing the organization of education and pupil welfare. A new aspect in the present decree is to promote a more collaborative school culture. The whole school community is taken into consideration as a learning environment. It presupposes a more active role of the whole learning community for enhancing learning and growth and welfare. It emphasizes inclusive education in all respects and pupils' involvement and participation. All education must improve the pupils' learning-to-learn skills and capabilities for lifelong learning.

Conclusion The intentions of the decree indicates a shift from a work culture based on individually working teachers' towards a collaborative one. Still, teacher is seen as an autonomous professional who has got the power to choose how to teach but who is invited to reflect on curricular issues in communication with others. Furthermore there is a more profound orientation in fostering societal, sustainable and ethical thinking and activities in preparing pupils for an active citizenship.

These developments are good indicators of educational leadership at the national level as working in relation to political interests. Deviating from a consensual tradition, the committee, led by the Director General at FNBE leading the first committee, obviously was not able to produce a result reflecting a compromise, but a report reflecting the interests of the right wing government for the time being. It appears as if the Ministry of Education and Culture perceived of the FNBE in a new way, instead of a longstanding tradition of a politically more balanced way of working. Ministry now expected this governmental body (FNBE) to produce a politically biased committee report. This shift is interpreted as to represent a new governance culture regarding curriculum making in Finland. Yet, due to the independence of FNBE reflecting a trust from the politicians, we see the Finnish policy discourse regarding the dynamics between politics and governance still representing a coordinative, rather than a communicative, discourse.

How Was the Curriculum Development Process Designed? The third question in this study was about reconstruction of how FNBE was working out the new curriculum, especially with respect to stake holders, pressure groups and practitioners.

The curricular planning work started in the summer of 2012 when the renewed Government Decree (422/2012) was approved by the government in the end of June 2012 as the result of a short-term work.

As described earlier the legislation of the Government Decree governing the national objectives and distribution of lessons hours in the basic education is a starting point for the curricular development work. The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) as the executive authority body led and organized the national core curricular work. As a first step in this curricular work on the national level FNBE was leading the process of codifying the legislative guidelines as defined in

the Governmental Decree into core curriculum outlines. The educational experts at FNBE have some freedom in interpreting the governmental decree but they are loyal to what is prescribed in the decree. This may be seen as a part of the consensual policy in the curricular work.

FNBE has a lot of power in the curricular work process but the role is characterized as a mediating role, which is based on interaction processes between different actors in several communicative spaces. Multidisciplinary working groups, supported by online consultation groups, were outlining the core curriculum. There were altogether 34 groups working in different fields, a steering group and a small group which was coordinating the whole process. The seven members of the coordination group were educational experts at FNBE. All educational experts at FNBE were involved in the process as support groups.

The secretary of the first Decree committee Irmeli Halinen was appointed the head of the core curriculum work. Meanwhile the second government decree was under construction by the second Committee the head of the core curriculum work organized preparatory work for the curriculum planning process at the Finnish Board of Education (FNBE). The educational experts did a thorough preparation work by mapping out current research and evaluation findings both nationally and internationally, educational policy and transnational educational trends in different countries. They studied EU and OECD documents and estimated the changes in the operating environment, analyzed the current state, e.g. national development projects, other legislative changes and development tasks and policy guidelines to be considered in outlining the core curriculum. The officials made acquaintance with development projects and every day experiences of municipalities and schools as well. Several stakeholders and representatives from different organizations were heard and consulted during the preparation process. The educational experts at FNBE were well prepared to take responsibility of the core curriculum work.

In the distribution of lesson hours there are some changes compared to the previous decree (Government Decree 1145/2001). The expert group representing the Ministry made a more conventional proposition on the renewal of the decree than did the earlier representative expert group (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010). According to the optional lesson hours the Ministry expert group took an opposite standpoint by reducing them. There is no change in minimum of lesson hours for the individual pupil, which is still 222 h as was prescribed in the previous decree. However, there are some changes between the minimum hours of the subjects in different grades. No new subjects are added, but some subjects have more lesson hours and some less. The hours for optional subjects are reduced with 4 h from 13–9. More lesson hours are devoted to social studies (+2) on an earlier stage, physical education (+2), music and visual arts (both +1 h). The hours in religion is reduced with 1 h. The integrated environmental studies in grades 1–6 include biology, geography, physics, chemistry and health studies. Home economics is integrated as a part of the subject group of Art education. There will be a more varied language program. The decree seems to head at a more participatory, physically active, creative and linguistically enriched school with integrated teaching and

learning. As a conclusion of the change in distribution of lesson hours the optional of lesson hours in different subjects has declined from 13 to 9 h.

The steering group had an advisory but a key role during the whole process and continued its work until the final version of the national core curriculum was delivered in the end of 2014. The group started its work in August 2012 directly after the government had approved the decree. The members of the steering committee were presenting 16 key representatives from e.g. the teachers' trade union, the Finnish principals' association, Ministry of education and culture, Ministry of social care and health, the association for parents, the delegation for ethnical relations, the institute for health and wellbeing, the confederation of Finnish industries and the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities. The chair, secretary and the presenting official were representing FNBE. The steering group was appointed to settle the principles for the revision work of the core curricula for pre-primary education, the basic education and voluntary additional basic education.

As noted earlier, the inner coordination group had done a thorough preparation work. Three other groups started their work beside the steering group in August 2012. The groups had core tasks in outlining the national guidelines and general principles. One group was working with structures and objectives (e.g. guidelines for integration). Another group was defining the learning concept, learning methods and evaluation, and finally one group was working for a more cultural and multilingual aware school. These groups had some subgroups as well. The steering group's task was to support the working groups and to emphasize an overall societal perspective in the preparation work, to foster the interest and the positive attitude to curriculum work and to keep the group members' partners and organizations informed.

The steering committee approved the curriculum guidelines for planning the curriculum in autumn 2012, which should be taken into consideration in all aspects in all curricular working groups. They were defined as follows:

- Promoting equity and equality in all areas of education
- Strengthening coherence and consistency of basic education, learning continuums
- Supporting pupil's growth and development, welfare and other prerequisites for learning
- Promoting a sustainable future as an objective
- Working with knowledge, taking into account technological change,
- Promoting broad-based multimodal literacy, media, ict that crosses all subjects
- Promoting awareness of languages and cultures, regarding them as richness
- Respecting dependences on international and on global dimensions (Halinen 2013)

According to the general guidelines the school should create better prerequisites for the school's pedagogical work, for meaningful learning and welfare for all pupils (principle of inclusion) and for a sustainable future and a democratic society. The guidelines underlined that the focus should be on deep learning and in creating versatile learning environments (Halinen 2013).

The process of drawing up the national core curriculum document was designed as a large scale partnership based process buttressed by trust and recognition and built on a broad-based co-operation in dialogue with education experts, researchers, administrators, teachers and various stakeholders, working teams and internet crowdsourcing open to everybody. Crowdsourcing was realized as a new kind of mode for opening the dialogue and engaging more participants in the renewal process of the core curriculum. The website was opened four times during the process: in November 2012 (general guidelines), September 2013 (pre-primary education) and in April 2014 (basic education and voluntary additional). Key stakeholders; education providers were asked to provide their official opinions on the new national core curriculum during the autumn of 2014. NBE's website's comments during the process were collected. According to our informants the comments considered a part of the work in the working groups and were taken into account in the process. Some stakeholders were very active, almost like pressure groups, e.g. representatives for entrepreneurs and for nature associations, which had an influence in formulating the key competencies. Because of numerous arenas and groups the dialogue between different stakeholders and school experts was more intensive than in earlier curriculum work processes. During the preparatory work more than 300 researchers, teacher educators, providers' representatives, teachers, school leaders and other school staff were heard personally. The aim was to encourage also parents and pupils to participate in the process (Halinen et al. 2013). The process could be characterized as communicative discourse (Schmidt 2008).

The national core curriculum includes the objectives and core contents of different subjects, as well as the principles of pupil assessment, and the inclusive oriented support system, pupils' welfare and educational guidance and the principles for a learning community. The Government Decree pointed the way to introduce competences for the first time in the Finnish National Core Curriculum. Also the preparatory work which was made of the educational experts at FNBE was influenced of other EU and OECD countries' educational policy trends, e.g. competence-based curricula. The descriptions of the competences were codified from the government decree and defined in relation to changes in the environment.

The competences are described as broad-based competences referring to knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, capacity and will. In the definitions it is possible to identify an influence of the transnational process of harmonization of educational objectives as competences (Stoer and Magalhaes 2009). Dimensions of broad-based competence as objectives for learning defined in the Finnish national core curriculum are defined as follows (FNBE 2014):

- Thinking and learning to learn
- Cultural competence, interaction and self-expression
- Taking care of oneself and others, managing daily life
- Multiliteracy
- Competence in information and communication technology
- Working life competence and entrepreneurship
- Participation, involvement and building a sustainable future.

To be put into practice the competencies as aims it presumes cooperation across school subjects and various kinds of working methods. The subject specific groups which began their work in January 2013 had to take into account these seven areas of competence, the general guidelines, the invited experts and website comments. Altogether 25 working groups were preparing the guidelines for subject based curricular parts. The groups were chaired by officials from FNBE. These chairmen were coordinating their job in several meetings. Additionally there were four groups with special tasks related to different educational challenges: small schools, pre-primary education, basic education for adults and voluntary additional basic education. The groups worked during meetings and in between through web links. All the groups were free to invite representatives from schools; principals, teachers and education providers and other experts for consultancy. The groups were also supported by online consultation groups. To what extent these online consultation groups had an influence on the groups' work is a question of a separate study. The subject specific groups finished their outlining work in April 2014. There is a significant change in subject syllabi compared to the actual one. The traditionally divided curriculum in a general and subject specific part is integrated through the competence areas, which are interconnected. The competence-based and subject-based teaching are combined in a new way. The objectives in the subject syllabi include competence goals. The competences will also be assessed as a part of the subject assessment. Moreover, collaborative teaching is enhanced by bringing about multi-disciplinary learning modules. The schools should have at least one learning module per year for the pupils, but otherwise they are free to decide about the learning modules. According to Halinen, Harmanen and Mattila (in press) the learning modules are efficient tools in promoting the transversal competences and pupils' understanding of interconnectivity between different phenomena.

The renewed core curriculum was completed by the end of 2014 and thereafter the reform work has continued as local curriculum development work due to local needs and policies both on a municipal level and at a local school level. The core curriculum consists of the intentions of the educational experts, planners and politicians. These official intentions will meet the reality in schools, principal's and teacher's work. These agencies at school level have a "make or break" role of curricular activities (Kelly 2009). This is the next phase to be studied. The curriculum reform work was completed in spring 2016 and local curricula were approved by 1st of August 2016 in order to introduce the new curricula in the beginning of the autumn term in 2016 for grades 1–6, in August 2017 for grade 7, in 2018 for grade 8 and finally 2019 for grade 9.

FNBE is active in supporting the municipalities and schools in the implementation process to succeed. During the curricular process at national level FNBE offered continuing education in cooperation with the Normal schools at universities. These network programs offered spaces for reflection for school leaders, local authorities and teachers and researchers. Supportive material has also been available for the development work at the website of FNBE. The national core curriculum documents are provided in an electronic and structured form as e-curriculum documents. An "e-library" has been established where all local authorities' curricula will

be available. This is also way of supporting – and pushing – the curriculum work to be done on a local level. It gives the national administrative authorities an overview in the curriculum reform process throughout the whole country and can also be seen as a tool for control.

FNBE is the executive authority body in the curriculum making process. The Ministry of Education was represented in the steering group. A research group (2,1 mme) is financed from the Ministry to do follow up studies of the whole curriculum process (2012–2018), (Pyhältö et al. 2012).

Interpretations and Discussion

Leadership as Mediation Between the Transnational and Local Level   As a starting point we assumed that educational leadership as curriculum work at the national level features mediation between transnational and local level. This can be observed by studying the new key competences accepted in December 2014 and previous EU policies. The objectives in the national decree from 2011 in Finland were developed and reformulated in the curriculum for the comprehensive education in terms of seven key competencies (FNBE 2014):

- Thinking and learning to learn
- Cultural competence, interaction and self-expression
- Taking care of oneself and others, managing daily life
- Multiliteracy
- Competence in information and communication technology
- Working life competence and entrepreneurship
- Participation, involvement and building a sustainable future.

The above key competencies correspond to some degree with those eight key-competencies furthered by European Union since a decade (Official Journal L 394 of 30.12.2006):

- Communication in the mother tongue
- Communication in foreign languages
- Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
- Digital competence
- Learning to learn
- Social and civic competences
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- Cultural awareness and expression.

Bildung and Transversal Competencies: – A Combinatory Curriculum Approach   Our impression is that curriculum work as discursive educational leadership practice at the national level is about finding a way to create a balance between cultural coherence and room for individual development. In spelling this out, in this curriculum both individual, local, national and global perspectives are visible.

Generally, the new decree emphasizes stronger than before, sustainable development and global responsibility as an objective. Inclusive education covers the students' well-being safety and equality. Meeting the students individual learning needs are put forth, as well as pupils' empowerment and will formation. These dimensions point at classical *Bildung* or character formation ideals. Maybe a future weakened welfare state and reorganized labor market is envisioned by the expectation to take care of one self and others and in emphasizing entrepreneurship? Cultural and linguistic interaction and diversity is offered more room and is considered as enrichment. This may be seen as a response to the global increase of cultural diversity within nation states, as well as international communication. A truly plural nation state is visible which can be seen against the hitherto low numbers of immigrants and refugees in Finland. The technological development requiring ICT and multimodal literacy competencies are clearly expressed. Skills for working life and entrepreneurship are pointed out. In our mind this represents a partly new dimension. On the one hand we think we see a curriculum for will formation, identity, recognition, care and responsibility, and on the other, a curriculum for political, cultural and economic citizenship, according to principles of sustainability. Critical thinking is not very visible.

Transversal Competencies and the Subject Matter The curriculum process from 2004 demonstrated a clear recentralization of many aspects related to the curriculum. The change 2004 also reflected a movement towards a more closed curriculum in an epistemological sense, emphasizing subject matter (Vitikka 2009). The current reform does not take this process any further, although the eligibility of lesson hours in different subjects was reduced. Rather, there is a shift in how objectives, contents and methods are conceptualized.

While the curriculum 2004 put the emphasis on contents, the curriculum 2014 emphasizes the general objectives in terms of key competencies. As a result, the role of the subject matter in the teaching process is now expected to change. Now the question is more clearly about to what extent teaching in a school subject supports the learner's development with respect to the key competencies above? Thus the Core curriculum 2014 for basic education does not only demonstrate an orientation towards a more holistic educational approach through an integration of school subjects, in multidisciplinary learning modules by expecting teachers to work together around so call phenomena. In addition, aforementioned cross-curricular or *transversal* competences are emphasized. Transversal competence "refers to an entity consisting of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and will. Competence also means an ability to apply knowledge and skills in a given situation (FNBE 2014; OECD 2015). The manner in which the pupils will use their knowledge and skills is influenced by the values and attitudes they have adopted and their willingness to take action" (Halinen et al. in press, p. 140).

Our interpretation is that the 2014 Curriculum partly represents a continuation of a *Bildung* oriented curriculum in Finland since the beginning of the 1970s. This is evident in the general objectives as expressed in the Government Decree 2012 and by emphasizing personality development in a holistic manner as observed above.

A new perspective in the current curriculum is the orientation towards key competencies. Compared to the Bildung inspired line of thought the aims expressed in terms of competencies more strongly emphasize pragmatic, instrumental and performative qualifications.

The How-Question: Towards a Collaborative Teaching Culture in Finland If the decentralised curriculum of the 1990s was recentralised in 2004, the philosophy behind the ongoing reform not only has an emphasis on the traditional curriculum questions of *what* and *why* of teaching and learning, but also on the *how* of education on a school level. The *how* moves the focus towards a more collaborative teaching culture where teachers in different subjects are expected to strive for common aims or competencies. Thus, the school is seen as a *learning community* with the task of developing the school's overall activity culture, i.e. as a pedagogical community. The teacher's classical freedom of choosing and working with right methods is now completed with viewing the school in its totality. However, the municipal level should not be forgotten here and is in fact included as apart of the local the unit of educational activities. Recent renewal of principals' education supports this change (National Board of Education 2014) and is very coherent with the idea behind the new school development plans launched 2013 (Pitkälä 2013). The aim is to engage school leaders, teachers and school personnel in discussions of how the schools could improve their activities. The municipal development plans may thus be seen as a part of a soft-governance system where the national agency provides the schools with a structure and a unified frame for development work. If resources will be allocated to qualified development plans this will be a strong incitament to take these plans seriously on the municipal and the school level. These plans can be investigated from a discursive institutionalist and systemic perspective where time, social practices, technologies, traditions, relations and position are united (Fairclough 2003).

A key question for the reform work to be successful is how the school communities will cope with the transformation process due to the new reform. The development work at the school level is a big challenge for the school and there is a need of a developed educational leadership and new collaboration. The curriculum reform presupposes that the schools will develop as professional communities. The school leaders together with the municipal education superintendents are in a key position in fostering the development of a professional learning community with spaces for reflection, sharing experiences and knowledge and in order to get enough unanimity in the school community for promoting the reform work in practice.

Non-affirmative Curriculum Leadership

The Finnish educational policy as a meta-practice of governance on a national level reframes the policy at the municipal level in the field of education. Local providers, usually local authorities are fairly autonomous in practising the educational policy

within the National Core Curriculum framework. Accordingly the steering group of the National Board of Education points out that there should be space and support for pedagogical development at the local level (Halinen 2013). Decisions on the local curriculum level are, as before, made by local authorities but now expected to be related to municipal educational development strategies. This involves the superintendents in school development at least on a strategic level together with the schools. This also supports the approach outlined in the theoretical frame for this study: the curriculum reform process is not considered a simple implementation process. The process rather reflects an invitational action structure. The general aims are there but how they are to be interpreted and put into practice cannot be dictated at the national level. As there is a space for local interpretations both teachers' and municipalities' autonomy is respected. This is why we call curriculum making as pedagogical leadership at the national level a non-affirmative practice. It is non-affirmative both in the sense that the National Board of Education itself is authorized to decide about the approval of the curriculum and also in the sense that the municipalities are given the ultimate responsibility to evaluate compulsory education and to make own interpretations of the curricular aims.

School reforms and changes in teacher's work are complex social processes that teachers interpret based on their personal understanding and experiences in curriculum development and everyday practices (Rajakaltio 2011). This truly distributed model of responsibilities is the foundation for a more discursive process in curriculum making. According to key-actors in the curriculum construction process *trust* is of paramount significance: "The key is trust. Teachers trust that the FNBE really listens to their experiences, needs and ideas, and the FNBE trusts that local authorities and teachers do their best in drawing up the local curricula and working according to the common guidelines." (Halinen et al. in press). It should be observed that this trust is not only about the prevailing educational ethos or organizational culture. As noted above, the National Board of Education itself is trusted to make autonomous decisions on the part of political steering and the municipalities have the right and obligation by law to lead, evaluate and develop basic education.

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Chapter 14
Curriculum and Leadership in Transnational Reform Policy: A Discursive-Institutionalist Approach

Kirsten Sivesind and Ninni Wahlström

Abstract Educational leadership research has in general focused on organizational conditions and expectations for managing and leading activities (Leithwood et al. 1994, pp. 38–61; Spillane and Healey 2010; Møller 2006, pp. 53–69) in parallel curriculum theories have offered insights into substantial societal problems that must be addressed in school and society (Hopmann 1999, pp. 89–105; Westbury 2000, pp. 15–54). This chapter presents a study in which we link curriculum theory both to discursive institutionalism and educational leadership policy and research findings. By including discursive institutionalism (Schmidt 2012) within a framework of curriculum theory, it is possible to distinguish between different forms of discourses and their functions in forming and conveying ideas. Thus, we explore educational leadership policy using a reflexive approach to reforms as intertwined with public discourses and research. A transnational perspective on leadership confirms the applicability of reforms across geographical territories, relating to wider societal and cultural contexts. Following an institutional-discursive approach, we argue that the ways in which social and educational questions become intertwined in actual reforms are dependent on cognitive and normative ideas in the public sphere. Thus, reforms to education leadership are related to coordinative and communicative discourses beyond the individual reform, while solutions to curriculum and leadership problems are anchored in educational policies and practices. Against this background, we argue that a deeper understanding of the meaning of educational leadership discourse and the conditions under which such a discourse is conducted is crucial.

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Introduction

Curriculum theory and leadership research reflect similar issues and problems, albeit based on different theoretical perspectives and origins. While curriculum theory is rooted in theories of education and society, educational leadership research takes as its starting point normative and cognitive models concerning organizations, situations, and persons. Moreover, the scientific orientation makes leadership research a useful recourse for political control across various sites and sectors. Our discourse analysis of 14 policy documents published by the EU (European Union), the OECD (the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), and various associated companies, demonstrates that the general and generic orientation of leadership models fits well with the overall ambitions and goals of transnational reform policy. Thus, educational leadership is regarded as an opportunity to improve the efficiency of transnational policy decisions and strategies, not least by reforming the tertiary education of school principals in the member countries. However, our main argument in this chapter is that there is a need to problematize the relationship between school leadership research, reform policy, education, and society. How are policy and leadership rooted in societal discourses? Can leadership models be applied in education without regard for curriculum issues and problems? How can these two fields, curriculum and leadership studies, learn from each other by promoting critical stances towards policy reform discourses?

There are three primary reasons for our suggestion of exploring how curriculum theory might contribute to educational leadership as a research field and as policy. First, the meaning of educational leadership is embedded within the larger context of transnational policy. Second, the meaning of educational leadership is deeply intertwined with ideological discourses on education at large, since this meaning cannot be distinguished from important curriculum matters related to teaching and learning in schools. Third, to fully understand the complexity of educational leadership, there is a need for a conceptual framework that takes ideology, structure, and actors into account. This implies a sensibility for sector-specific dimensions, which in our case relates to educational mandates, curriculum reform and the purposes of education.

Drawing on discursive institutionalism (Schmidt 2008, 2012), the purpose of this chapter is to introduce a framework for the analysis of transnational educational leadership policies that include underlying assumptions about society and education in general. First, we offer a short introduction to the history of the curriculum and leadership research fields in order to demonstrate the overlapping scopes and interests as well as the differences and relationships. We then introduce a discursive-institutionalist approach as a framework for the analysis of policy documents concerning educational leadership that addresses transnational problems and perspectives in the current school systems in Europe and beyond. Curriculum theory

comes into the discussion as both a foundation for understanding how the perceptions of leadership as reflected in our documentation relate to institutional and societal ideas, and how policy- and research-based conceptions of leadership forms are attributable to programmatic ideas and norms within education (as illustrated in Table 14.1). Finally, we make use of the institutional framework to discuss (i) the ways in which the established discourses on educational leadership associated with curriculum problems are linked to the basic notions of community needs, (ii) how the transnational meaning of educational leadership is maintained through a coordinative discourse, and (iii) how this agreed meaning is promoted to the nation states through a communicative discourse.

Curriculum Theory

The long-standing issues of curriculum and reform have both been subject to extensive research over the years. In the field of curriculum studies, educational reform is above all analyzed according to the origin and institutionalization of public schooling, which has today developed into comprehensive education systems (Hopmann 2003; Lundgren 2003; Westbury 2003). The curriculum as a research field links the study of contemporary problems in education to the tradition of historiography and on to a large range of reflection theories that developed from the early nineteenth century onwards. Moreover, the field of curriculum research has primarily dealt with the history of educational ideas and the study of educational systems and institutions in which legislation and reforms have been a primary topic of study (Doyle 1992; Gundem 1994). However, contemporary researchers add new perspectives to the field by examining governmental changes across and within specific geographical territories and in relation to comparative and international studies that consider the uniqueness of the reforms to a wider societal and cultural context beyond the national (Sivesind and Karseth 2014). A traditional focus of curriculum research has been to examine the topical structure of teaching practices in the context of pedagogy and schooling (Hopmann 2007; Uljens 1997). In curriculum research, the policy and practice of schooling, as well as its programmatic dimensions, have been approached by research that draws on different theories and traditions. First, in the curriculum field, a major presupposition is that the curriculum, whether understood as a curricular framework, teaching material, or a course of study, relates to formalized and institutionalized modes of teaching practices that can be traced back to the pre-Renaissance (i.e., between 1000 and 1250) when schools were licensed by church authorities and not by the state (Hamilton 1989: 12–13). According to this perspective, the relevant ideas and concepts are related to the classical thinkers of Ancient Greece (Hopmann 1999; Lundgren 1979). Since that time, thoughts and

theoretical distinctions are considered perennial, although they have undergone ground-breaking changes with reference to alterations to the education system and the surrounding society (Hopmann 1999; Schubert 1986; Westbury 2000). For this reason, curriculum theories serve as more than a source for empirical research on institutions, organizations or persons in various settings. Curriculum theories approach practical and moral problems of education, first of all by making use of ideological and societal perspectives to critically reflect upon core conditions and processes in education.

Second, the *reconceptual approach* became central to curriculum studies during the 1970s in both the American and European contexts. William Pinar stands out as a key researcher in this tradition (Pinar 1978), while Englund (1990) argues that this approach has also been the core idea of curriculum history research in Scandinavia and Europe. The main aim of this perspective has been to establish a critical response to historiography studies and empirical conceptual approaches, which were part of the prevailing tradition of curriculum studies in the Anglo-American field in the 1960s.

In the Scandinavian context, Lundgren (1972) examined several questions that were of political interest during the early 1970s, such as the consequences of dividing pupils into homogeneous versus heterogeneous school classes with respect to the differences in their learning achievements. He later called for increased attention to be paid to the political aspects of education along with a reconceptualizing approach. This position was inspired by British scholars, particularly Basil Bernstein and Michael Young, who both argued for a new direction for the sociology of education from the early 1970s (Bernstein 1971; Young 1971). The conceptual configuration of this "new direction" expresses what occurred during the 1970s as a theoretical shift. Formalized regulations and institutions were no longer viewed as the solution, but rather as the problem. Instead, research on the sociology of education focused on outcomes and the structures that could explain those outcomes. For example, the main goal for Young was to shift the focus from thinking of schooling as being determined by society to instead contributing to the determination of society (Young and Whitty 1977). This shift in perspective highlighted the potential to change society through education research.

The main viewpoint of the new sociologists was that knowledge is produced and reproduced by dominant groups in society and is, therefore, highly ideological and political in character. One major presumption of Bernstein's theory was that the school system favored pupils from the middle class over those from the working class, partly because of its way of structuring the use of language that contributes to a power dynamic. A vertical dimension connecting politics and schooling was introduced, and it conceptualized the curriculum as socially organized knowledge involving different kinds of interests (Young 1971). Later books and articles written by Bernstein (2000/1996) and Young (1998) centered on pedagogy, social discourse, and a recontextualized approach to identity and knowledge.

In recent decades, when curriculum standards entered the arena of educational reforms, they became a focus of attention too (Muller 2000). As a consequence, new research issues emerge within critical research that are informed by educational and

societal perspectives (Sundberg and Wahlström 2012; Yates 2009; Young 2008). For this reason, curriculum theories serve as more than a source for empirical research on institutions, organizations or persons in various settings. Curriculum theories approach practical and moral problems of education, first of all by making use of ideological perspectives. However, later theories have integrated the formal and societal-discursive perspectives, as well as their materiality, to critically reflect upon core conditions and processes in education. From this point of view, structural reforms possess interpretive dimensions that must be considered according to practicalities, discretion, and sensibleness in policy, research, and practice. Nonetheless, the features of education cannot be comprehended as organizational categories alone, but are instead institutionalized within their societal environment (Menck 2000; Reid 1986, 1999).

At the beginning of the 2000s, a relevant question is how schooling as an institutionalized pursuit is challenged by the views of what counts as core units of analysis, such as competences and outcomes, compared with other kinds of purposes and pursuits, as part of the larger context of society. The interest in scientific approaches to reforming teaching in schools, which was followed by a constructivist approach to research and education, has also called for a stronger focus on the actors and systems and how they contribute to both the reproduction of society and the renewal of the education system. It is within this area, by framing our analysis within an institutional-discursive approach, that we can see an interface between curriculum theory and leadership research.

Leadership Research

Leadership research examines how various actors are influencing the work of others in order to accomplish certain goals. In school leadership research, the school principal stands out as the key actor within the school organization. For this reason, educational leadership research has traditionally placed emphasis on how the school principal performs a specific role and function within the school as an organization. The responsibility of school principals can be related to different tasks and duties within the schools, as well as to teaching, although the teachers have been considered to control the agency over classroom decisions. In educational leadership research, one strand of research focuses on management as the key concept characterizing what school principals do within their organizations, while another strand of research considers leadership as a broader concept, which includes not only administrative but also relational and human features.

Until recently, educational leadership studies have focused on how leaders conduct leadership through power relations, thereby influencing others within the context of the school organization. Based on theories from the larger field of organization studies, these studies can be broadly sketched by their orientation to traits, contingency, and transformational theories (Lingard et al. 2003). While traits theories

regard leadership in light of personal dispositions and qualities as dependent on the style and capacity of the person who is leading an organization, contingency theories emphasize how styles and behaviors are adapted to particular situations. The leader is, in this case, expected to coordinate goals and activities, being the prime instigator of the delegation of tasks and responsibilities by regulating other people's mind sets and activities. Transformational leadership theories add the dimensions of vision and vision building to leadership studies. This perspective also integrates ideas regarding how transactions are played out by individuals, assuming that persons act rationally toward each other to achieve certain benefits from their involvement with organizations (Leithwood and Jantzi 2006). A more recent theoretical approach suggests that distributed leadership is a helpful perspective for studying how schools exercise informal power that goes beyond the boundaries of both formal responsibility and the school context. This perspective also invites discussion on what constitutes democratic leadership in light of the discursive and political aspects.

Educational researchers have stressed the importance of situational theories and site-based work. Noteworthy studies utilizing this approach have been conducted by Hallinger and Heck (2010), who argue that instructional leadership is dependent on the mutual influence between students' learning and school capacity, which is shaping and is shaped by the collective leadership that is conceptualized as school-wide actions. These actions involve actors such as principals, teachers, administrators, and others. Based on this approach, educational features, such as constructing a school curriculum, are not separated from school leadership but are essentially a part of it (Hallinger 2010). Further, instructional leadership is seen as encouraging transformation, not merely by normative means but by developing the organization's cognitive capacity to select its purposes and support the development of instructional practices. This approach includes an interest in curriculum matters and school cultures, as well as the ways in which schools are capable of fostering high expectations for learning. Not only first-order change is highlighted, wherein technologies or persons directly regulate the work of students and teachers, but also a second-order phenomenon, whereby the school conditions and the climate require persons to change their actions within the organization (Hallinger 2003, p. 338). Consequently, instructional leadership is thought to exert both a direct and an indirect influence on individuals' actions and activities within the school organization.

In transformational leadership theories, common goals and shared visions serve as a key focus Thus, the shaping of the ideologies of members of an organization is a key issue in these studies (Leithwood 1994). The attention paid to goals is also important for examining transactional leadership as different from, or simply as an aspect of, transformational leadership. To examine how leaders and their followers exchange gratifications in order to achieve the best results, rational choice theories are built into these research approaches (Bass 1997, 1999; Burns 1978). Researchers who adopt this position often refer to empirical evidence to support their arguments concerning how such transactions make an impact on the processes within school organizations as well as their outcomes (Leithwood and Jantzi 2006; Leithwood et al. 1994; Oterkiil and Ertesvåg 2014). One consequence of this research approach

is the study of particular factors that might explain the actions and priorities of the actors involved, such as the significance of a school's leadership, in terms of teachers' resilience. Day and Gu's (2010) study of effective and trusting relationships within organizations demonstrates that a school's leadership is actually regarded as the most important factor for organizational resilience, which supports transformational and transactional theories (see also Mulford (2003)).

In recent years, within school leadership research, as well as in national and local policy making, a distributive perspective on school leadership has aroused intense interest. A distributive view of leadership recognizes that leading schools can involve multiple individuals in addition to the school principal—"the leader-plus aspect"—and that leading a school is fundamentally concerned with interactions rather than about the actions of individual leaders—"the practice aspect" (Spillane and Healey 2010). According to Harris (2007), this view of distributed leadership rests on an idea of leadership as cognition. Research on distributed leadership is characterized by an interest in opening up new perspectives on the question of who can take part and who can be counted on when studying leadership practices. For example, Woods et al. (2004) understand distributed leadership as an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals operating within an unlimited space in which distributed expertise extends the boundaries by going beyond the formal functions of an organization. It has been argued that distributed leadership does not necessarily guarantee democratic processes and practices because it does not explain who is in control of whom and on what premise; therefore, it is suggested that there is a need to integrate sociological theories into discussions about the complexity of organizations and leadership studies (Gronn 2009). In the debate regarding democratic leadership, Lingard et al. (2003) argue that educational leadership must acknowledge complexity, diversity, and equity as salient characteristics in the formal leadership task of every school principal. Based on this perspective, the democratic features are specifically taken into consideration, and they have also been the focus of several studies on educational leadership within the Scandinavian context (Johansson 2001; Moos et al. 2004; Møller 2006). However, the political/democratic aspects of leadership practices cannot be viewed as merely being generated by a single leader and leadership practices in schools. This argument has led to sociological and critical-oriented studies that seek to interpret leadership as an aspect of policy formation related to the democratic problems of society (Gunter 2012; Møller and Skedsmo 2013).

This brief overview of the leadership theories indicates that educational leadership research represents a diverse field that would benefit from a theoretical framework with the ability to simultaneously capture the societal and ideological policy level and the different dimensions of the governance of institutionalized education. From both an instructional and a transformational perspective, and based upon the most recent discussion on distributed perspectives, it becomes clear that a deep understanding of the context of educational reform and policy changes is as important as an awareness of the relevant actions of school leaders, teachers, and others who are involved in school leadership. Moreover, comparing the field of theories in leadership research and transnational policy, we see an urgent need for self-reflection

on the ways in which leadership definitions are included in the justification of policy. In light of curriculum theory, there seem to be several overlapping policies and practices between the research fields (Uljens and Ylimaki 2015). However, the understanding of educational leadership as it is described in articles and textbooks risks being either too general—that is, there is no distinction between leading a school or leading other social practices (see Young 2008)—or too restricted—that is, each school/district is considered to be its own independent unit.

We thus suggest that the meaning of educational leadership needs to be conceptualized by means of an *institutional multilevel analysis*, whereby transnational educational policy formations, as well as national governing discourses, curriculum problems, and local school leadership practices, are taken into consideration. In the following section, we turn to the theory of discursive institutionalism to frame our analysis into an integrative approach linking transnational policies on educational leadership to curriculum theories and problems. Our aim is to create a framework through which educational leadership can relate to curriculum theory, including the wider societal/ideological perspectives that are helpful in understanding the discourse of educational leadership. By this, we will not enter into the field of educational practices, but will instead examine the policy level within a transnational policy discourse.

A Theoretical Framework: Discursive Institutionalism and Curriculum Theory

Discursive institutionalism is a collective term for exploring the content of ideas and the interactive processes that are reflected through discourses in institutional contexts. This fourth version of the new institutionalism approach is focused on both the theorizing of the substantive content of cognitive and normative ideas and the interactive discursive processes and argumentation by which these ideas are produced, conveyed, and potentially lead to collective actions (Schmidt 2012).

Schmidt (2012) argues that agents within institutions possess two forms of abilities: background ideational abilities and foreground discursive abilities. Schmidt (2012) interprets background ideational abilities as a human capacity to understand and structure the environment from know-how concerning how the known world works. Human background ideational abilities allow actors inside and outside institutions to speak and think about institutions in certain ways, thereby contributing to both creating and maintaining institutions through collective discursive actions. Discourses work simultaneously at two levels in institutions. The background ideational abilities represent an everyday level of communication within and about the institution. The foreground discursive abilities, conversely, comprise actions when people distance themselves from the everyday institutional activities and discuss and reflect on the institution at a more general level, which also involves reflection and change from an "outside" perspective. Thus, the foreground discursive abilities

provide the basis for a coordinative discourse that is characterized by the creation, elaboration, and justification of a certain policy. They also provide the basis for a communicative discourse that takes the ideas and policies outside the institution to "the public" for discussion and deliberation. The public here includes political actors, media, interest groups, and ordinary citizens who can act on and contribute to the discourse by engaging in the discussion (Schmidt 2012).

Discursive institutionalism distinguishes between two types of ideas: cognitive and normative. Cognitive ideas offer solutions to the problems at hand and represent the reasoning for what should be done and why. They include proposals, suggestions, guidelines, and so on that are based on what should be done upon consideration of the circumstances; that is, they express "necessary" actions that are evoked by certain causes and logic. Normative ideas, contrastingly, offer values as the bases for cognitive ideas. They add values to policy actions and policy solutions, and they legitimate policy with reference to normative values and ideologies. If cognitive ideas are legitimized by factual causes, normative ideas are argued for in terms of more general values (Schmidt 2008).

By combining the levels of cognitive and normative ideas with coordinative and communicative discourses, it becomes possible to analyze questions regarding when and where educational discourses on school leadership matter, who is setting the agenda, and to whom the agenda is communicated. When a special meaning that is embedded in a specific material context is translated to another context, it opens it up to a "discursive gap." This gap constitutes a space for the production of discourse through the recontextualization of meanings; that is to say, when a discourse moves away from its original site and into a new arena, a transformation occurs by means of which different elements of meaning within the discourse are selectively appropriated, relocated, refocused, and so on. Although elements of the discourse can be recognized, it is not totally the same discourse anymore, since possibilities for partly new meanings have been created through the transformation from one arena to another. The construction of policy discourses and educational leadership discourses can be understood as processes recontextualizing discourses by moving between different arenas, thereby reinterpreting certain dominant concepts of a discourse (Bernstein 2000/1996).

The Policy Documents: Data and Analysis

Discursive institutionalism as a research strand helps to classify groups of statements in policy documentation that articulate how actors approach formal and substantive aspects of societal fields as well as their communicative character. In our study, we selected policy documents from the EU and the OECD, which we expected to reflect a transnational discourse on education reform policy beyond the national level. By initially screening a cluster of policy documents that we downloaded from the EU and OECD websites, referred by national authorities in our own countries

(i.e., Sweden and Norway), we selected a total of 14 documents that articulated meaning concerning the ways in which leadership makes sense as part of reform policy within and across national contexts. Thus, in our examination of the documents, we conducted a qualitative study that sought to unravel their meaning (Coffey 2014, p. 8) as well as the discourses this meaning related to. Discourses were then thought of as "an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices" (Hajer 2003, p. 300).

To avoid a biased selection of documents compared to the existing corpus of policy documents published by the two organizations, we compared the reference lists between the documents and we made use of a snowball method by checking for other documents concerning leadership and leadership research that were mentioned within the papers. In this way, we could trace the ideas and discourses using a forward and backward tracing strategy, utilizing references in one document as pointers to other documents and thereby constructing a text corpus.

The documents were examined with regard to theory and, at the same time, informed by the narrative descriptions that we condensed in order to generate images of what was written about leadership, leadership research, and reform policy. The narrative descriptions were constructed by the use of a technique for identifying themes (Ryan and Bernard 2003). The themes were discovered by reading through the selected documents and clustering expressions in light of the theoretical perspectives framed by an institutional-discursive theory. Dimensions such as spheres, normative and cognitive ideas, and coordinative and communicative discourses guided our reading of the documents and thereby our means of identifying and categorizing themes. By analyzing the themes and the narrative descriptions, as condensed by re-reading the documents, we were also able to point out ways in which leadership and leadership research were conceptualized within the discourses of reform policy for each of the fields and levels included in our study. Thus, we did not apply an evaluative approach to study the documents, but rather an interpretative point of view, for the sake of developing analytical perspectives and theories (Kuckartz 2014). In order to make the theoretical and deductive dimensions transparent, we will present the core concepts and perspectives of Schmidt's (2012) theory. However, our core purpose is not merely to make use of this theory in a deductive way, but with regard to the documents, to conduct an analysis that helps to renew perspectives on curriculum and leadership research.

In terms of discursive institutionalism, Schmidt (2012) distinguishes between three different spheres, although for this study only the first two are relevant. The *public philosophy sphere* represents a basic sphere of public worldviews and assumptions that underpin the policy solutions, although these assumptions are seldom consciously formulated or even recognized. Instead, they form a background for the sphere of programmatic ideas. The public philosophy sphere generally includes two forms of ideas: normative ideas and cognitive ideas. Normative ideas are concerned with legitimizing policy programs that express the suggested solutions by referring to how they are rooted in a deeper understanding of the world. Cognitive ideas are instead concerned with the interpretation of these background

assumptions in the public philosophy sphere in order to define the problems to be solved and identify the solutions to be used in the programmatic sphere. The *sphere of programmatic ideas* consists of a more general program that functions as a common frame of reference for ideas, actions, and solutions that are suggested as possible responses to a problem. This sphere is characterized by its foreground position, which means that ideas and suggestions are debated and discussed on a regular basis.

The spheres of discursive institutionalism are broadly in line with the levels of analysis that are generally suggested within curriculum theory: a societal/ideological arena in which basic assumptions regarding the needs of a society and ideas about education are formed, and a programmatic arena that represents the actual concrete policy documents proposed. A third level of analysis points to the so-called classroom level, where the suggested policy solutions are interpreted and performed in local practice (Deng and Luke 2008; Lundgren 1979). By combining these arenas with the public philosophy sphere and the sphere of programmatic ideas of policy formation, discursive institutionalism contributes to curriculum theory with a more elaborate tool of analysis capable of distinguishing between cognitive and normative ideas, as well as between coordinated and communicative discourses.

In this chapter, the focus of the analysis is transnational educational leadership policy. Therefore, only the first two spheres or arenas are relevant to this study. The analytical interpretive framework combines concepts and meaning from discursive institutionalism and curriculum theory via an analysis of leadership discourses emerging in transnational policy documents. An overview of the combined framework for the present study is presented in Table 14.1 below (see also Wahlström & Sundberg 2017).

Table 14.1 The framework of analysis and the links between the perspectives in discursive institutionalism, curriculum theory, and leadership discourses

Transnational arenas	Discursive institutionalism	Curriculum theory	Leadership discourses
The societal/institutional realm	Public philosophy	Institutional/societal ideas	Organizational theories
	Normative and cognitive ideas about society and education	Basic assumptions concerning society and education	General ideas of the need for leadership in schools
The programmatic realm	Programmatic ideas	Programmatic ideas and norms	Programmatic models
	Coordinative and communicative discourses	Common policy understanding and recommendations to reform education	Policy- and research-based suggestions for the type of leadership needed

Societal Ideas and Programmatic Discourses on Educational Leadership in the Transnational Arena

In this section, we present the results of the analysis in terms of the normative and cognitive ideas in the sphere of public philosophy on education in general and on school leadership in particular. Further, we report on coordinated as well as communicative discourses concerning educational leadership in the field of programmatic ideas.

Public Philosophy: Ideas and Assumptions Concerning Education and Educational Leadership

Often in policy texts, the references and justifications in the overarching discourse refer to "the rapidly changing world." This is also true for the overall discourse on education and school leadership. At a very general level, the basic assumption can be formulated as in the following example:

> *Across the globe, the 21st century is seeing rapid economic and social change. Social and population mobility allied with technological advances and an increased focus on schools to perform mean that students today face very different challenges from their predecessors (*Pont et al. 2008b, *p. 3).*

Together, these changes are assumed to alter the role of schools, as well as the role of school leaders, in fundamental ways. Three distinctive implications of the current challenges for education in relation to leadership can be noticed in the OECD's argumentation: (i) school autonomy, (ii) school accountability, and (iii) school leadership going beyond the individual school. With the increased autonomy of schools comes the increased autonomy of school leaders. Therefore, school autonomy is closely linked to school accountability in terms of student performance, for which school leaders are, in turn, ultimately responsible. The school leaders are also supposed to take on a broader responsibility, including for other schools and the local community in terms of a system-wide school improvement. The aim of this form of school leadership is to develop what the OECD refers to as system leadership. It is linked to a normative idea of a learning organization. Further, system leadership, with its systemic focus, is assumed to have the potential to contribute to system transformation (Pont et al. 2008a). However, system leadership can only exercise influence in relation to the degree to which it is focused on teaching and learning. Thus, a coordinated discourse of system leadership opens up programmatic discourses of personal leadership (as "system thinkers"), of distributed leadership, as well as of instructional leadership. The cognitive idea of the need for leadership of the school itself is never questioned in these transnational policy documents. Instead, the interest is focused on the meaning of education leadership in a rapidly changing world. A cognitive answer to this challenge is that educational

leaders need to take on a new role as system leaders in a broader understanding of leadership. The cognitive idea is that only if school leaders are both working close to their own school and with other schools and school leaders, caring for the success of both their own and other schools, can they contribute to changing the whole system to be more effective and successful in terms of results.

The belief that it is necessary to change the school system as a whole is related to another basic cognitive idea of the effect of education on economic growth. Within this set of cognitive ideas, human capital is a core concept (Boarini et al. 2012). The way in which the OECD deals with this issue, for example, is to relate students' skills, as measured by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), to economic growth by means of recent economic modeling. The OECD's conclusion is that if each member state boosts its average PISA scores by 25 points over the next 20 years, there will be "an aggregate gain of OECD GDP of USD 115 trillion over the lifetime of the generation born in 2010" (OECD 2010, p. 6). A similar idea was expressed in the *Lisbon Strategy* by the EU in 2000: "The Union has today set itself a *new strategic goal* for the next decade: *to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world*" (European Council 2000, p. 2, italics in original).

To meet the demands for change, the main normative idea in the transnational arena is that of continuous learning from cradle to grave. In the discourse on lifelong learning, "competence" is a key concept. The identified competences are supposed to express the individual ability that is needed to meet the complex demands created by globalization and modernization in an increasingly interconnected world characterized by diversity. Both the OECD and the EU have formulated frameworks of key competencies, and both systems of competencies are measured by the PISA surveys (European Commission 2007, 2013; Rychen and Salganik 2005). The idea of lifelong learning also implies that school leaders need to develop effective leadership skills for leading learning communities. By implementing the frameworks of key competencies, both the OECD, through the PISA surveys, and the EU (European Council 2000), through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), have the normative tools for monitoring and evaluating their member states' adaptations of a framework for lifelong learning.

Programmatic Ideas of Education and Leadership in the Transnational Policy Arena

Programmatic ideas about education and school leadership in the transnational policy arena are analyzed by examining the coordinative and communicative discourses of educational leadership. On the transnational programmatic level, ideas of curriculum are incorporated in a technical- instrumental coordinated discourse. The technical-instrumental curriculum discourse is characterized by the assumption that curricula ought to be designed in accordance with economic and labor market

related demands. It is in light of this discourse that the emergence of performance-based and standards-based reforms can be understood because of their ability to measure "knowledge outcomes" in a seemingly comparable way (Sundberg and Wahlström 2012).

A Coordinative Discourse of Effective Leadership

The "Rethinking Education" program, which was launched by the EU in 2012, argued for the importance of member states investing in education and skills training as the most valuable tool for increasing Europe's competitiveness and productivity (European Commission 2012a). It is noted that school leaders spend more than 40% of their time on management and administrative activities. It is also noted that the number of applications for school leadership posts is often very low in the member states. The European Commission states that educational leadership is second only to teaching among the school-related factors that determine the outcomes of students' learning (European Commission 2012b, p. 43). The quality of school leadership is believed to affect both the motivation of teaching staff and the quality of their teaching. It is argued that the PISA results are higher in countries in which teachers are held accountable to school leaders and to external inspectors through the monitoring of lessons. The school leaders' impact on the ethos of the school is also believed to be significant (European Commission 2012b). In a policy discourse in which efficiency and equity are placed at the foreground of education, school leaders are at the intersection of educational policy and its implications at the school level. The efficiency discourse emphasizes teachers' motivation, skills, and competences as key factors for achieving high quality learning outcomes; in turn, the quality of educational leadership is an essential factor for achieving the goal of good teaching with an ability to inspire all students and make them all want to learn. What is referred to as "effective school leadership" is viewed as crucial for shaping an effective environment for teaching and learning—a learning environment with high aspirations that are supported by appropriate organizational structures and a good school climate. Two factors are highlighted in the efficiency discourse for school leaders: first, it is of key importance to ensure that school leaders are not overburdened with administrative work; and, second, it is important to ensure that school leaders have the capacities and qualities needed to handle an increasing number of very diverse tasks (European Council 2009). The coordinative discourse is consistent with a discourse of transformational leadership research, which expresses the purpose of leadership as motivating followers to work toward common goals. The leaders need to use their charisma and their ability to inspire their staff (Leithwood 1994; Leithwood and Jantzi 2006). In later texts, instructional leadership and managerial leadership have been subsumed within the overall concept of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership has a clear connection to the policy-based and neoliberal concept of New Public Management (Hall et al. 2013), and its representatives argue that it is possible to find correlation between

transformational leadership and student outcomes (e.g. Sun and Leithwood 2012). Basically, transformational leadership promotes a role for the education leader as a "lonely hero" leading the team toward common goals to improve the school, although advocates of this leadership conception have also tried to go beyond a one-sided, individually shaped leadership. In the coordinative discourse there is, however, still a strong normative idea about who can take on a role as principal, what set of central skills he or she needs to have, and that, in the end, the success of the school is dependent on the abilities of its principal.

Communicative Discourses: Implementing Policies

The policy slogan of getting the right people to be principals has gained lot of media attention in recent years. The motto is also echoed in other policy documents from the OECD (2013) and the private sector (Barber and Mourshed 2007; Mourshed et al. 2010), and it mirrors the individual leadership expressed in the coordinating discourse above. The slogan summarizes a political understanding of leadership against which the communicated leadership discourses on the programmatic arena are reflected.

The McKinsey report from 2007 comprised several simple solutions for school systems that want to reach the top of the results table, including advice concerning educational leadership. It is all about "getting the right people to become school leaders," providing "these people with the right set of skills," and structuring "the roles, expectations and incentives to ensure that its principals focus on instructional leadership, not on school administration" (Barber and Mourshed 2007, p. 30). In this efficiency discourse, the "right" school leader is him- or herself an excellent instructor who spends his or her time coaching the teachers to become better instructors and, as a consequence of this coaching, improves the teachers' ability to increase the students' achievements. The ideal principal is a person who focuses on helping the teachers to learn from each other, a person who is constantly spending time out in the classrooms and halls among the students, and a person who engages in e-mails and administration only after everyone else has left the school for the day. On the other hand, in a follow-up study, the need to support the school leader with a school system that includes adequate administrative staff is emphasized to ensure that the principal can focus on educational leadership. The ideal in this subsequent report is rather the "collective capacity" that is reached when teachers and school leaders work together to examine "what works" and to improve instruction together (Mourshed et al. 2010). In these two examples of the efficiency discourse on educational leadership, the message is addressed directly to the national policy arena. This is a discourse that is pre-eminently interconnected with a standards-based curriculum format because the leadership logic is based on the premise that "good" education leadership manifests itself in improved knowledge results. According to the EU (2012a), EU reforms have streamlined curricula across the EU by introducing standardized tests and infrastructure for literacy, mathematics, and science centers.

Thus, the ideal of education leadership needs to be interpreted in close relation to the promotion of standards-based curriculum reform at a programmatic transnational level.

Furthermore, the policy text has the character of a decontextualized manual: if you act like this, your national school system will improve regardless of where in the world you are. In the two reports referred to above, a displacement from an individually to a more collective leadership ideal can be discerned. Stated otherwise, in the programmatic arena the communicative discourse is moving from an individual to a distributed leadership discourse, although still remaining within a normative idea of system leadership and learning in organizations as well as within a coordinative discourse of transformational leadership.

Based on references to current research within the field of education leadership, the OECD also communicates a discourse of distributed educational leadership for schools. The assumption is that effective leadership does not need to be exclusively related to one or a few formal positions; rather, it can be distributed across a number of individuals and teams in the school. According to the OECD (Pont et al. 2008a), the "increased responsibilities and accountability of school leadership are creating the need for distribution of leadership, both within schools and across schools." In accordance with this formulation, distributive leadership can be understood as part of the "system leadership" concept, formed in the field of cognitive ideas in the societal/institutional arena. In the same vein, the European Commission (2012b) argues that the core competencies for educational leadership can be supported by policy, for example, the impact of the principal tends to be stronger where the degree of school autonomy is higher. The Commission defines the core competencies as the ability to have *vision* and to be able to inspire others, to think strategically, to enhance learning environments and learning cultures, to improve the quality of students' learning and their learning outcomes, to manage resources effectively, to have good knowledge of the school system, to have strong communication skills, and to be able to solve problems. While all of those competencies can be said to represent systemic skills, the Commission also believes that successful education leadership requires specific personal characteristics. "School leadership staff are also likely to be most effective if they possess personal attributes such as courage, optimism, resilience, tolerance, emotional intelligence, self-awareness, energy, ambition, commitment and a desire for learning" (European Commission 2012b, p. 46). As school leaders are given greater responsibility for their school's academic achievement, the EU urges their member states to promote distributed leadership as a route to school improvement. A collaborative approach to leadership includes a "greater degree of networking and mutual learning between school leaders at local, national and European level" to promote "self-reflection, encourage further professional development, facilitate mutual support, disseminate policy and practice … and mitigate some of the effects of between-school competition" (European Commission 2012b, p. 51).

So far, there have been strong links between personal (transformational) leadership and collective (distributed) leadership in the programmatic ideas of the transnational policy arena. There is a clear communicative discourse advocating that

although a distributed leadership is increasingly favored, a collective leadership still needs to be led by a charismatic leader with a multitude of requested characteristics. At the same time as both individual and collective leadership represent two strong, intertwined conceptions of leadership in education policy documents, there is also a third theme of leadership in the communicative discourse. In 2013, the OECD published an expert report that outlined the concept of "learning leadership" as a distinct new concept of leadership compared with, for example, instructional leadership and leadership for learning. It is emphasized that learning is a basic starting point for educational leadership policy. "As learning is the core business of education, it provides the paramount form and purpose of leadership focused on creating and sustaining environments that are conducive to good learning" (OECD 2013, p. 9). This approach is fully in line with the normative idea of lifelong learning as a public philosophy in the societal arena:

> *…learning leadership is specifically focused on the design, implementation and sustainability of innovative, powerful learning environments through distributed, connected activity and relationships of a range of formal and informal leaders throughout a learning system (*OECD 2013*, p. 9).*

Learning leadership builds on earlier findings concerning the importance of school autonomy, distributed leadership, and leadership as the path to school improvement. In fact, the latter is specifically emphasized in the claim that leadership is highly influential for learning and outcomes at all levels of the school system. The interest is centered on *leadership* itself, which means that all those included in a distributed leadership are affected, not only those who hold formal positions. The purpose of a learning leadership is to shape the conditions for "deep learning" to take place, in contrast to a merely instrumental view of learning. It is about creating innovative learning environments adapted to the challenges of the twenty-first century, calling for leaders "to be creative, thinking differently, and taking risks as they push themselves out of their comfort zones and experiment with developing and implementing new designs and encouraging others to do the same without fear of failure" (OECD 2013, p. 23).

Even if the basic analysis is still the same, leadership has an important impact on school results and so that leadership needs to be distributed to many. The requirements have now been increased and the demand of an innovative learning leadership implies that leaders are expected to continuously put themselves at stake. This approach is echoed in a curriculum strategy emphasizing that countries should "foster entrepreneurial skills through new and creative ways of teaching and learning" and focus on "the opportunity of business creation as a career destination" (European Commission 2012a, p. 4). The communicative discourse of both education leadership and curriculum expresses dissatisfaction with a school that is perceived to be too traditional and poorly adapted to the current requirements of the global labor market. Though the innovative approach is highlighted and it characterizes the discourse by introducing a partly new way of talking about leadership, the original purpose of the improvement of students' outcomes is still intact. In this "new" discourse, leadership is spoken of as dominated "by the relatively enclosed world of

formal schooling"; a learning leadership can, however, "open horizons" and explore what leadership means in "complex environments that mix different players, settings, and styles" (OECD 2013, p. 14).

The concept of leadership that emphasizes "to lead" as well as to distribute a collective leadership is related to the modernization of the public sector in terms of the New Public Management (NPM). During the same period, distributed leadership has also aroused a considerable interest within educational leadership research. Gunter et al. (2013, p. 559) use the term "functional" to designate approaches that focus on "removing dysfunctions from the system, particularly in globalizing economy where governments have adapted modernizing accountability processes." The term "normative" expresses a desire to change and improve practice. A functional-normative perspective of distributed leadership thus represents research that provides findings that form the basis for specifically designed national leadership reforms with the purpose of promoting good practice, or the so-called evidence-based policy initiatives. The research orientation is related to the research fields of school improvement and school effectiveness, with international organizations such as the OECD and the EU acting as mediators. The research within this field claims that the principal cannot lead the school alone; instead, the principal needs to share the leadership with others. It is argued that research makes it possible to identify the best way in terms of how and to whom the leadership should be distributed, which leads to practical advice concerning the leadership factors affecting the school and its outcomes in a positive direction (Gunter et al. 2013).

Educational Reform, School Improvement, and Leadership

In this study, we have linked curriculum theory to discursive institutionalism and to educational leadership policy and research. Curriculum theory is helpful for illustrating how policy formations are recontextualized in different transnational and national arenas. We demonstrate how different actors, both governmental organizations and private multinational companies, form coordinated horizontal discourses of what it means to be a "good" leader. By including discursive institutionalism within a framework of curriculum theory, it becomes possible to distinguish between different forms of discourses and their different functions in forming and conveying ideas (Schmidt 2012). Coordinative discourses are nourished by ideas available in the public philosophy of a society through the elusive phenomenon of the "public spirit." Such a strong normative vision of the overarching international arena is the idea of lifelong learning and the need for all citizens to learn throughout their lives.

A dominant cognitive idea on the societal international level concerning educational leadership is that schools need to have principals and that those principals have the ability to affect the outcomes of the school. The transnational perspective on leadership confirms the presence of reforms as travelling across geographical territories relating to wider societal and cultural contexts (Steiner-Khamsi 2013). The basic supposition is that when society changes rapidly in terms of its commu-

nication and migration patterns, the principal also needs to go beyond his/her own school and exercise leadership in a wider system in order to change and transform the school in a more powerful way (Pont et al. 2008b).

These normative and cognitive societal ideas about lifelong learning and system leadership are reflected in the transnational discourse coordinated between different international actors on a programmatic level. There is a common understanding of educational leadership as being exerted by an individual person capable of leading followers toward common goals for an improved school. The focus on improved results requires a common transnational policy of a standards-based curriculum with predetermined goals and standardized national and international tests (Sundberg and Wahlström 2012). From this coordinated vision, there has been a gradual displacement towards a distributed leadership involving both formal and informal leaders of the school (Leithwood and Jantzi 2006; Lingard et al. 2003; Spillane and Healey 2010); however, the image of the impact of the leader from a transformational leadership concept is still very tangible within a distributive understanding of leadership in policy documents.

A collective view of leadership develops to be the dominant coordinative discourse, and from this common base of distributed leadership, three different communicative discourses of functional-normative beliefs (Gunter et al. 2013) about leadership can be distinguished. There is a strong discourse of getting "the right person" to be a leader linked to a transformational leadership (Barber and Mourshed 2007). However, there is also strong advocating for a distributed leadership, not least from the OECD (Pont et al. 2008a, b). More recently, as if neither the transformational nor the distributed leadership has been able to offer enough force to seriously challenge and improve the school system, a learning leadership has been introduced (OECD 2013). The latter has close connotations to innovation and "thinking outside the box," manifested through the language used within this orientation of leadership. Learning leadership is not a new form of leadership, but rather it is a variation of distributed leadership developed into network formations and experimentalism to provoke the system from within. The suggested solution for improving learning and knowledge results in schools is to keep the focus exclusively on learning, leaving other institutional commitments aside. Learning leadership can be said to illustrate a well-known truth within curriculum theory, namely that it is not easy to get reforms to deliver the expected results (Karabel and Halsey 1977; Lundgren 2006). In educational leadership policy and in much of the research on leadership, the expectations of the results of school reforms and school improvements are placed on the shoulders of principals as the central actors in schools (Barber and Mourshed 2007; Mourshed et al. 2010; OECD 2013; Pont et al. 2008a, b).

By relating leadership research to communicative transnational discourses of educational leadership policy, it seems clear that certain international research and transnational policy initiatives can be viewed as symbiotic. In particular, the functional-normative orientation of distributive leadership is developed in close connection to the policy needs of evidence-informed recommendations concerning factors expected to contribute to improved educational outcomes. However, as this

chapter has shown, both societal and educational issues are crucial in reform policy, as well as the formal, substantive, and discursive dimensions. Following an institutional-discursive approach, we will argue that the ways in which social and educational questions become intertwined in actual reforms are dependent on cognitive and normative ideas in the public sphere. Thus, reforms to education leadership are related to coordinative and communicative discourses beyond the individual reform, while solutions to curriculum and leadership problems are anchored in educational policies and practices.

Against this background, we argue that a deeper understanding of the meaning of educational leadership discourse and the conditions under which such a discourse is conducted is crucial. While educational leadership research has so far focused on the organizational conditions and expectations for managing and leading activities, curriculum theories have offered insights into societal and educational problems to be dealt with in school and in society. We suggest taking both fields into consideration in future policies and practices; however, not without a reflexivity around how reform and research are intertwined. It is with this ambition in mind that we have approached curriculum and leadership from a discursive-institutionalist perspective.

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