Uniting Policy, Practice and Research - where is Educational Leadership for School Development in Finland Heading?

A reformative and recognition based approach to educational leadership

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What?
To provide an interpretation of how educational leadership policy and practices in Finland have changed (1972-2013) - with a focus on ongoing policy processes.

How?
I. Outline of a “transformative/reformative theory” of educational leadership as the point of departure.

II. Report results of an analysis drawing on policy documents, and interviews with officials (national board of education & superintendents)
Step 1: Different types of “educational leadership” on different levels/forms of practice

a) Teacher “leads student’s studying (learning)”

b) Principal - “leads teachers teaching”
   – leads professional teachers

c) Superintendent “leading leaders leadership”
   – mediates between politics, administration and schools

d) National
   - politics, laws & budget & curriculum & organization/system

e) Transnational
   – EU, also OECD, World Bank, WTO, UN, etc.

What does our theory aim to explain? A specific level or the system? How to keep these levels together in one theory?
Pedagogical work as distributed vertically, horizontally and "diagonally" over interconnected professionalities as well as complementary societal and organisational practices.

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<td>Planning</td>
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- Student
- Classroom
- School
- Municipality
- State
- Transnational

A. How do we cooperate, learn and lend horizontally?
B. What kind and degrees of freedom/influence exist between levels?
C. How do we cooperate across levels and phases of work - diagonally?
What type of theory?

a) philosophical
   - E.g. normative vs descriptive? Phil. anthropology, epistemology, ontology, axiology, action, mind...?

b) object theoretical
   - regional ontology, analytic/prescriptive models of “good” leadership,

c) empirical description
   - participatory vs observatory, qualitative & quantitative

And how do we explain the relation between our theory and the practice of leadership?
How may different levels be related to each other?

Proposal: By an idea of how education is seen as related to individual and societal change.

A comprehensive educational leadership theory must explain the dynamics of two topics and their mutual relation:

A: School-Society (SS)

B: Leadership-Teaching-Studying-Learning (L-T-S-L)

A reformatory (transf.) view of school-society:

Two problematic, normative, models

1. Socialisation model (John Locke)
   - Education prepares for existing order
   - Assumption: Education subordinated to politics and economy
   - Contemporary reality is the norm – "school is the tool"

2. Transformative model (J.J. Rousseau)
   - Education prepares for given future state
   - Assumption: Educational policy transforms society by the help of school
   - Future ideals offers the norms – "school is the tool"

Normative models tend to turn education to technology.

See http://www.vasa.abo.fi/users/muljens/pdf/Education.pdf
Reformative and non-confirmatory educational leadership theory
(Fichte, Schleiermacher, Hegel)

1. A relative freedom is guaranteed for the school, ultimately for student.
2. School prepares for the existing world – but in a problematizing fashion.
3. Democratic ideal – prepares for individuals participation in societal change.
4. Educational intervention accepted – ”Man becomes man only among men”
5. The question of good life – an open question.
6. Human freedom assumed– provocation (intervention) to self-activity.
Non-confirmative educational leadership:

= non-normative, prepares the individual for democratic citizenship, to make use of her productive freedom

= makes use of positive knowledge in order to reach the questions to which existing policies, norms, knowledge or practices are seen as answers

Of equal importance is to develop the learner’s and teacher’s ability to formulate questions to be answered.
Position taken to Problem 1: School-Society

i. An ateleological model of individual and societal development.
Denies education as pure confirmation of external normative ideals.
Requires schools to educate for an unknown future.

ii. Non-hierarchical relation between societal forms of practice (Dietrich Benner)
Education both sub- and super-ordinate in relation to economy, politics, ethics, law.

iii. Reformative leadership theory coherent with principles of sustainable development
On each and every level: "Educational leadership" as a multi-professional, critical-interpretative, mediational practice between epistemic fields (1-6) and values

1. Pedagogics  2. Culture  3. Technology

Politics

Educational leadership and management

Ethics - Justice & care

Position to problem 2: Leadership-Teaching-Studying- Learning (LTSL)

A modern version of the pedagogical paradox: The individual may reach cultural, productive, freedom only by being recognized and treated as if she already is free (or reflective, capable, etc.).

Educational leadership includes recognizing somebody as if she already is capable of doing what she is expected to become capable of - and act accordingly.

Educational leadership as invitation/intervention/demand/provocation/violation/disturbance/expectation concerning the Others relation to herself, world and others.
Two constitutive principles in understanding the relational teaching-studying-learning process:

Summons to self-activity
(intervention, invitation, challenge)

Bildsamkeit (intentional learning="studying")
This process is initiated by subject's accepted invitation to engage in self-reflective activity.
Reformative and recognition based Educational Leadership

REL as a non-confirmatory and cultural-historically developed individual and institutional non-hierarchical practice
- on different levels of the educational system.

REL as moral and rational, interpretative and position taking practice that mediates within and between various epistemologies (knowledge practices) and value-spheres (ethics & politics)

REL relates to recognition oriented social philosophy (Honneth) (subjectivity-intersubjectivity) concerning the Other’s a) potentiality (freedom), b) reality and c) possibility.

REL as summoning the Other to self-activity, i.e. to invite the Other to intentionally engage with her/his current intentions/experiences/understanding/knowing/practices.
School Didaktik sees teaching as interverting in the student’s relation to the world where the teacher’s and student’s experience of the content is a vehicle. Teaching as intentional, interventional, interactional and institutional activity is framed by intentional (P) and reflective (E) dimensions on different levels (see Uljens, 1997).
Part 2. Positions and changes in Finnish educational leadership policy and practice on different levels

Analytic tool

Two simple but crucial dimensions in human activity:

a) Intention = Planning (e.g. curriculum)
b) Reflection = Evaluation of education

How are these dimensions put into practice?
a) Planning, e.g. Curriculum centralised, national level

b) Evaluation local responsibility

decentralised, local level

external responsibility, centralised and transnational

Within this system four different main positions are identified.
Positions and Changes in Educational Leadership Policy 1972-2012 in Finland (Uljens & Nyman, 2013)

Curriculum and government: centralised

1. Management by objectives and rules

2. Teaching profession and partly leadership research based (academisation)

3. Deprofessionalisation? outcomes - evidencebased, effective schools

4. Reprofessionalisation: research-based & data informed school & professional development

Evaluation and assessment:
- internal responsibility
- external and transnational responsibility

Evaluation and assessment:
- Social democratic welfare state
- Social liberal market state

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Curriculum and ”governance”: decentralised
Position 4: New forms of partnerships and collaborations between Universities-Schools-Administration (USA-cooperation)

-Dilemma: How to balance between autonomy (relative independence) and collaboration?

PRACTICE in Schools
As leadership on national, municipal and school level

RESEARCH
-University & practitioners

POLITICS & Administration
On state and municipal level
Position 4:

Research based knowledge & policy based data made used in “school improvement & professional development” as an intertwined (interrelated) process:

Experience- and policy-based developmental work

Research- and evidence-based developmental work

New arenas

Development-oriented and interventional research

Basic research on scientific grounds

National authorities - Superintendent - Principal - Teachers
How research based knowledge & policy based data is related to “school improvement & professional development” as an intertwined (interrelated) process (in Uljens, 1997):

A. Educational practice

B. Dialogue

C. Research knowledge and evaluation data

Reflected experience

Subjective theories

Activity

Experiencing

Intention & tradition

Reflection

Problematization and approaching

To reflect other practices in relation to subjective experience

a. Shared practice

b. Theory

Contributing to theory and shared experience

Problematizing

Research and developmental work
Four leadership positions and four research paradigms

(Uljens & Nyman, 2013)

Curriculum and government: centralised

Positivist
1. Management by objectives and rules

Interventional
4. Reprofessionalisation: research-based &
data informed
   school & professional
development

Interpretative and ideographic
2. Professionalisation and
   academisation of leadership and
teaching

Quantitative
3. Deprofessionalisation?
   Outcomes- and
evidence-based, effective
delivery of contents

Evaluation and assessment:
- Social democratic
  welfare state
- Social liberal
  market state

Evaluation and assessment:
internal responsibility

External and transnational

Curriculum and "governance": decentralised
Position 4 (2008 →) in Finland
Reprofessionalisation/recontextualisation: research- and policybased evidence in school development

1. Top-Down oriented policy approach strengthening – but towards development


3. Invisible how eg. Ministery of Education in Finland (and in other countries) operate via transnational organisations and levels in order to achieve what is aimed for.

4. Policy borrowing more than obvious – ongoing dialogue between countries.

5. Participation in international evaluations continues (Pirls, Timms, Talis Pisa)

7. Data-informed pedagogical development, not data- or evidence-driven

8. NO public ranking of schools (cf. non-hierarchical view of policy and education)

9. School improvement rationality, rather than a control, inspection and evaluation oriented rationality

11. Partnerships are being built upon a tradition of recognition of, and trust in, teachers’ professionalism.


14. New, networking, forms of collaborations emerge between superintendents, principals/schools, administration, and research.

15. Negotiative / communicative leadership between curriculum input and learning outcomes.

16. Diversity between schools accepted.
17. Paradox of principal education - still organised by National Board of Education

- at a few universities 25 years
- only qualified and experience teachers can enroll PE programs

Principals and superintendents operating in the tension between:

a) different epistemological rationalities:
   Evidence from Policy-driven Evaluation
   Evidence from Independent University Research

b) increasingly stronger, political-ethical interests:
   Private Parental interests
   Public Policy interests (Stronger Top-Down policy instrumentalises leadership (new managerialism))
References


