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Chapter 4
Towards a Multi-form Professional Development of Educational Leadership

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Abstract This chapter aims to investigate the professional development of educational leadership based on the need to define and develop leadership in educational organisations that are in the middle of complex challenges and changing operational environments. The data of this study were collected through interviews and project descriptions of the key actors of the four key projects of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland. The data were analysed using problem-driven qualitative content analysis with inductive reasoning. The main results included both the common aspects, such as the development of education in educational leadership, and more project-specific aspects, such as an emphasis on the specific context, in these projects. Furthermore, it was found that the professional development of educational leadership could be supported when, for example, the need for flexibility and supportive networks are recognised. In addition, when describing the holistic development of the professional leadership in education, it is crucial to provide multi-form and equal development opportunities to individuals and communities at every level and in all leadership positions during their entire careers. The results of these development experiments can help both national and international audiences in the professional development of educational leadership in their educational systems.

Keywords Educational leadership · Education · Professional development · Competence

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Introduction

At present, educational organisations are faced with complex challenges at different levels and from various directions – locally, nationally and internationally. For example, top-down policies can increase competing pressure in educational contexts without making real changes (Normand et al., 2021). In the face of these challenges, both the expansion of learning, such as acting and learning as a collective effort to build and achieve a common purpose, and goal and personal authority, such as individual efforts in the process towards achieving the common goal, are needed (cf. Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022). The reciprocal influence of the aforementioned issues is also significant. The diffusion of the educational leadership process in a natural way throughout the organisation becomes possible when learning is expanded. With this, the organisation has better opportunities to respond to unexpected and continuous societal changes taking place in the twenty-first century, such as the COVID-19 pandemic situation, increased use and development of technology and the influence of various factors related to cultural diversity (Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022).

In the process of educational organisations and actors pursuing learning and development as described above, there is a crucial need of professional leadership in these organisations. In the process of developing professional leadership, it is important to ask and investigate what kind of leadership is professional in the educational organisations of these days and to be able to respond to various challenges that these organisations are currently facing within their rapidly and constantly changing operational environments (e.g. Alava et al., 2012; Finnish National Agency for Education, 2013; Kumpulainen, 2017; Risku & Tian, 2017, 2020). In this regard, how professional leadership could be developed and supported nationally and internationally should be investigated.

In response to this need to investigate and develop professional educational leadership, four key projects of the Ministry of Education and Culture (2018–2022) concentrated on developing educational leadership in Finland. They included

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ArkTORI, EduLeaders, KOPETI JO and DAWN (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022a). These projects were part of a broader development entity initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In 2016, the Ministry of Education and Culture appointed the Comprehensive School Forum. The aim of this forum was to develop and reform the Finnish comprehensive school system. As part of the new comprehensive education, pre- and in-service teacher education was renewed. In cooperation with teachers and stakeholders, the Teacher Education Forum prepared the Teacher Education Development Programme that strategically determined the direction of teacher education and the development of competence during the teaching career. One of the strategic guidelines of this programme emphasised leadership development to create schools to fulfil the communities' learning and development needs. In practice, the ministry awarded nearly 28 million euros in grants for projects to develop research-based teacher education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022b). These projects included four projects for educational leadership development coordinated by four Finnish universities and one university of applied sciences.

This chapter aims to investigate the professional development of educational leadership in Finland with the help of the data gathered during these four projects. The study contains an examination of the multi-form professional development of educational leadership at organisational, regional and national levels. Furthermore, this chapter provides an example of how research-based experiments develop professional educational leadership implemented in the Finnish context. The research questions were as follows:

1. What aspects of educational leadership have been developed?
2. How can the professional development of leadership in education be supported?
3. With what kind of holistic development can leadership in education be developed?

Professional Development of Educational Leadership

Educational leadership is a broad concept basically referring to any leadership in education (Elo & Uljens, 2022; Risku & Alava, 2021) despite variance in its conceptualisations (e.g. Adams et al., 2017). Educational leadership occurs in global (e.g. comparative standardised assessment), national (e.g. governmental decisions on national core curricula) and local contexts, such as in organisations and individual classrooms (cf. Elo & Uljens, 2022). In an educational organisation, educational leadership includes both management and administrative work (Nivala, 1998). The goal of educational leadership is, either directly or indirectly, to ensure that education fulfils its core mission and goal: student learning. However, if we try to reach this goal, there is a real need for support, professional development, social recognition and community engagement so that these bottom-up processes can be long-lasting and connected to global developments crucial for student learning (Normand et al., 2021).

During recent decades, theoretical and empirical approaches perceiving educational leadership as a socially constructed and contextual phenomenon have been emerging (e.g. Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022; Uhl-Bien, 2006). For example, Jäppinen and Taajamo (2022) defined educational leadership as a multifaceted process (cf. Jäppinen, 2020) where there is continuous co-growth. It involves motivating efforts to achieve together something that individual members of a community or network could not accomplish alone. The underlying idea here is to achieve the common good jointly by individuals, groups and teams of educational organisations. In this process, new ways of thinking are formed, thus leading to creative development in the form of a common opinion and goal. This, in turn, becomes apparent as purposeful and goal-oriented activities (Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022). Bush (2007), on the other hand, suggests that leadership is an influence process based on clear values and beliefs, and this leads to the school's vision. Even though principals and other formal leaders in educational organisations have certain specific leadership responsibilities tied to their positions (Catano & Stronge, 2007), perceiving educational leadership as a shared, collective and socially constructed phenomenon recognises the diverse members of the professional communities of an educational organisation, such as teachers, as leaders.

One stream of change during recent decades has been that conceptions of education and teaching have moved in a more professional than vocational direction (Carr, 2000). There are, for example, legitimate concerns about educational accountability to the practical needs and interests of parents, employers and the wider community behind this development. Furthermore, teachers and educational leaders have to think of the values that they are transmitting and their own neutrality in a multicultural and pluralistic world. Professionality and professionalism describe the requirements of a particular class or category of occupation, such as teachers and educational leaders (Carr, 2000; Hanhimäki, 2011). For example, principals enact their educational leadership by mediating between several societal praxises, such as pedagogics, politics, ethics and law (Smeds-Nylund & Autio, 2021). However, a rearranged labour division between state and local authorities with a lot of space for ethical educational leadership in the Finnish context challenges every educational professional's agency and autonomy. In addition, this demands that our educational system supports educators and educational leaders in their professional development (Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021).

At the core of educational leadership as a socially constructed, shared and collective process, there is a professional learning community (PLC) of an educational organisation. There is no complete agreement on PLC's definition, but it is usually agreed that the primary purpose of these communities is to improve student learning and teacher practices (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). A PLC consists of the members of a school's work community with diverse expertise and competence (Sai & Siraj, 2015). It is central in a PLC that its members share together what they have learnt, learn together as a collective and build shared understanding (Muijs & Harris, 2003; Sai & Siraj, 2015). To effectively support these kinds of actions and to build collective competence, it is important that the leadership enacted in a PLC is shared, collective and synergetic in nature (Morrissey, 2000, pp. 5–6). This kind of leadership

and the related competence and capacity means, for example, understanding leadership as a collective responsibility, promotion of de-privatised leadership practice and competence in reflective dialogue (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). These competencies are required and can be developed on both the individual and collective levels of a PLC. In educational organisations, formal leaders, such as principals, play a significant role in facilitating the kind of leadership and culture that support a PLC to function in an ideal way (Johnson & Voelkel, 2021; Sai & Siraj, 2015). For this reason, it is highly important that formal leaders of educational organisations develop their competence to act as facilitators in their communities.

In addition to leading a PLC, educational leaders act as part of broader multidisciplinary networks consist of various professional sectors and actors, such as social and healthcare services. According to (social) network theories, leaders, as representatives of organisations, have an important role as builders and sustainers of (inter)organisational linkages and relationships (Balkundi & Kilduff, 2006). Furthermore, leaders of educational organisations are required to consider the characteristics of the context in which they are functioning, such as local, cultural and societal factors (e.g. Khalifa et al., 2016). In this regard, many competencies, such as understanding diversity and seeing it as a strength (Barakat et al., 2021), as well as being able to act in an inclusive way (cf. Roberson & Perry, 2022), are required.

Furthermore, when we see the leadership of learning as a core duty, pedagogical leadership is a significant part of educational leadership (Elo & Uljens, 2022). There are various ways to approach and define the concept of pedagogical leadership (e.g. Fonsén & Soukainen, 2020). A rather broad consensus exists that pedagogical leadership aims at leading learning by enhancing and developing pedagogical practice (Heikka, 2014), a culture supporting continuous learning and (professional) development (cf. Elo & Uljens, 2022) and the human capital of a school, referring to both the teaching personnel and students (Sergiovanni, 1998). According to the broad-based approach to pedagogical leadership (see Chap. 8), it includes both direct and indirect pedagogical leadership, the former referring to the process of learning and teaching and the latter to the context and environment in which this process occurs. Central competencies related to pedagogical leadership contain various kinds of professional knowledge, such as content knowledge, (content specific) pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge and knowledge of learners, as well as competence in the related administrative decision-making (Robinson, 2010).

In this chapter, we investigate the professional development of educational leadership in the Finnish context based on the definition of educational leadership as studying, developing and educating the phenomenon of leadership in education (Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021; Risku, 2020; Risku & Alava, 2021). Leadership can be seen not just as a domain of an individual or role but also found everywhere in the actions and interactions amongst all of an organisation's actors (Spillane, 2012). Leaders work in the 'between' space, and with the help of this point, they can integrate and influence knowledge and ideas passing in all directions throughout their educational ecosystems. For example, they are policy navigators between policy as a more rational side of educational systems and practice as a more human

side of schools (Supovitz, 2021). This special space and point demand continuous professional development in educational leadership.

When we develop education in educational leadership, we try to respond to the needs of the professional development so that current and future educational leaders can be flexible and able to cope with consistent challenges and continuous changes. For example, one of the main learning theories used in education by the Institute of Educational Leadership is integrative pedagogy as a model for expertise development (Heikkinen et al., 2012). This model combines theoretical and conceptual knowledge, practical and experiential knowledge, self-regulative knowledge and socio-cultural knowledge in learning situations (Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021; cf. Lyons & Bandura, 2020; Tynjälä, 2013). All four components mentioned above should be present in the learning environment (Lyons & Bandura, 2020). The purpose of the integrative pedagogy model is to provide tools for creating learning environments that serve learning more systematically than informal learning. In integrative pedagogy, it is important to focus not only on individual expertise but also on collective and collaborative expertise (Tynjälä, 2013).

Changes in Educational Policy Towards Educational Leadership Development

In the Finnish education policy and governance system, the state steers education and collaborates with other actors. Even if the legislation and other regulations mandate education providers, such as municipalities and local authorities, via local decision-making, they have a lot of autonomy to organise their provisions of education. In the context of educational organisations, educational leaders and teachers respond to education providers (Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021; Risku & Tian, 2020). Development and the system of Finnish educational policy, governance and leadership are presented and considered in more detail in Chap. 2.

During the 2010s and 2020s, educational leadership in Finland was in the middle of many changes on all education fronts in the Finnish education system. The first example of these educational policy changes has happened in Finnish Early Childhood Education (ECE), which has undergone several structural and fundamental changes in recent years. An administrative shift from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to the Ministry of Education and Culture was implemented in 2013. The ECE Act (2018) was also renewed in 2018, replacing the old Day Care Act of 1973. Through these reforms, ECE has moved into the education and teaching sector, constituting the first phase in children's schooling path instead of providing the earlier focus on the social services provided to parents (Finnish National Agency for Education [FNAE], 2018, 2022; Fonsén & Vlasov, 2017). Because of these reforms, the need to renew leadership and competence to lead ECE has been topical. In particular, pedagogical leadership has been an essential approach to developing leadership in ECE (Fonsén & Soukainen, 2020).

The second example of the remarkable educational changes was the reform in vocational upper secondary education in 2018, which updated the entire Vocational Education and Training (VET) and consolidated VET for young people and adults. The core aim of this reform was to create competence-based and customer-oriented education and to increase learning in the workplace (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022c). The third example of these changes was the extension of compulsory education in 2021. This means that all students gain an upper secondary qualification, as the minimum school-leaving age was raised to 18 years (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022d).

At the same time, with these educational policy changes, there has been a continuous discussion about how to define educational leadership in the Finnish context and practice. For example, school leadership can be understood in various ways and according to different discourses. If one wants to improve a school according to the Learning Outcomes Discourse, the focus has to be on the correct and effective implementation goals set on a national level. National and transnational tests are important. On the other hand, in the Democratic Bildung Discourse, the focus has to be on empowering professionals and students to learn as much as possible and develop non-affirmative, critical and creative interpretations and negotiating competence (Moos et al., 2020). The Finnish school leadership discourse follows the latter in a culture of trust in school professionals and without national accountability measures (cf. Simola et al., 2017).

One example of this culture of trust is that even if the Ministry of Education and Culture has the power to use key policy instruments of legislation, financing and information-based steering, the actors have been trusted and have an autonomous status in Finland (Finnish Government, 2021). For example, the Ministry of Education and Culture summoned the universities to self-activity to be part of the development of principals' educational leadership, recognising their ability to answer the invitation (see Chap. 9). At the same time, autonomy and responsibility in the dynamic and complex governance system challenge educational leaders, their ethical leadership and their competence. Thus, there is a real need to develop education in educational leadership so that it can better respond to the needs of the professional development and help leaders cope with consistent challenges and continuous changes (Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021).

Data and Methods

The data of this study were gathered from four focus group interviews and one individual interview conducted to investigate and develop educational leadership. The interviewees were the main actors of the four Ministry of Education and Culture key projects described in detail in Table 4.1. In addition, the general project descriptions made by the projects' staff were utilised in the data analysis.

Fifteen people, including three to five actors from each of these four projects, participated in the interviews. The research assistant conducted the interviews with

Table 4.1 Description of the four Ministry of Education and Culture key projects

Project names and coordinators	Why was the project implemented?	What was the aim of the project?	What was developed in the project?
ArkTORI – School Leadership in the Arctic University of Lapland	To support the professional development and leadership skills of principals in comprehensive education, with a special emphasis on the regional specificities of Northern Finland	To plan an educational leadership education for the University of Lapland, develop practices and tools, such as a peer-mentoring model and a digital tool for principals to support their professional development	Planning and development of many educational and the training opportunities, such as the launch of the qualifying educational leadership study module for the degree students at the University of Lapland
EduLeaders – Development and Research Project for Basic and Subject Studies in Educational Leadership University of Helsinki	The need for educational leadership studies has been evident amongst comprehensive education and ECE leaders in the capital area. In addition, many ECE centres suffer from a lack of qualified personnel, and the staff needs strong pedagogical leadership	To develop basic studies of Educational Leadership (25 credits) at the University of Helsinki, further studies based on evaluation and research data collected by the LeadEd scholars, and develop and pilot the advanced studies in Educational Leadership (35 credits)	The basic studies curriculum was developed, and the advanced studies (35 credits) were piloted and evaluated
KOPETI JO – School Pedagogical Leadership Åbo Akademi University	Before this project, qualifying studies to become qualified principals were offered as only continuing education for qualified teachers. Thus, the formation of teacher–students as a target group of the project was a new phenomenon, and both the content and the structure of the studies needed constant evaluation	To develop and pilot a principal education programme, in particular, adapted for teacher–students in Swedish in Finland according to F986 / 1998 at Åbo Akademi University in Vasa	Five separate courses were created, and a study programme called Educational Leadership (25 credits) was formed for teacher–students within their studies to become teachers

Table 4.1 (continued)

Project names and coordinators	Why was the project implemented?	What was the aim of the project?	What was developed in the project?
DAWN – Strengthening Leadership Skills of Personnel in the Field of Education University of Jyväskylä and Jamk University of Applied Sciences	The project was based on the need to develop leadership competence in education in all education tiers in the Finnish education system	To develop a multi-form and coherent holistic development for education in educational leadership	The main idea of the entity for education in educational leadership was developed, which is need-based concerning the needs of many levels (individual, organisation, region and society) and has individual paths in collaborative environments in a societally appropriate way

the web application Zoom in the spring of 2021. The permission to conduct the research was sought from the interviewees. The interviews were semi-structured, with open-ended questions. The themes of the questions concerned the participants' views of the current state of educational leadership in Finland, its ideal development and the nature of a potential multi-form nationally cohesive entity for its development. The participants answered the questions in any order they wanted, and the nature of the interviews was interactive. The interviews included features of an in-depth interview because the topics were often pondered and discussed by the participants in a highly profound manner. The interviews lasted from 38 minutes to 1 hour and 13 minutes, and they were transcribed literally.

The main research questions that were investigated with the help of this data were as follows: (1) What aspects of educational leadership have been developed? (2) How can the professional development of leadership in education be supported? (3) With what kind of holistic development can leadership in education be developed? The data were analysed with problem-driven (e.g. Krippendorff, 2013) qualitative content analysis with inductive reasoning (e.g. Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The transcriptions of the interviews and project descriptions were read many times to identify the contents related to the research questions. First, the main aspects of educational leadership development were listed. Second, the contents related to the second research question on supporting the professional development of leadership in education were gathered on a coding sheet. Third, the contents related to the third research question on holistic development entity for developing leadership in education were gathered on a coding sheet. In this chapter, the straight interview quotations are marked with a code P, which means project, and numbers 1 to 4, which indicate four projects (e.g. P1 indicates project one). However, these numbers are not in the same order as they are in Table 4.1 because of the anonymity of the projects' staff.

Results

Aspects of Educational Leadership Development

When we analysed the aspects of educational leadership development, it was found that the common aspect for all four projects was to *investigate and support the educational leaders' professional development,* and thus the leaders' skills and competence. In addition, they all wanted to investigate the state of education and start their first or new education processes and studies in educational leadership. Furthermore, they all conducted mixed-method research and included various datasets, such as surveys, interviews and learning materials, in their studies. The target groups represented all education tiers of the Finnish education system, such as principals and educational leaders from early childhood education and care to higher education. In addition, both faculty–student groups and continuing education students participated in education and research.

The projects mainly focused on developing (future) principals' leadership competence, but concurrently perceived *educational leadership as a phenomenon enacted by multiple and various actors.* These actors included those working in educational organisations, such as teachers, and those collaborating with educational organisations, such as researchers and municipal actors.

Moreover, *education in educational leadership* was developed in all four projects. For example, one of the projects created a programme worth 25 credits, even if the resources were limited, with lower numbers of staff and teachers hired on an hourly basis to cover all aspects of school leadership. All courses were created together with the field, with experts from education, such as superintendents and juridical experts. The exchange with the field was deemed particularly important. As for the development work in another project, this project could use a broad network and a long history of education in educational leadership and pilot new ways to enhance educational leadership with various groups.

In addition to the common aspects, we identified other aspects of educational leadership that were developed and investigated in more than one of these projects. In three of the four projects, the development of educational leadership emphasised *a specific context* that consisted of, for example, regional and cultural specificities of the community and the educational organisation, with its specific purpose and goals. It was recognised in the development work conducted through the projects that educational leaders need competence to identify the special features and conditions of the context in which they work and lead, as well as to navigate and act successfully in their specific contexts. For example, it was emphasised as the starting point in one of these projects that the principal has the overall responsibility for administration, leadership and development work in the educational institutions in all school forms. Thus, principals need to understand the specific conditions of their own units concerning the diversity of local, cultural and societal circumstances, traditions, school cultures, student and child groups, staff and guardians.

In two of the four projects, *the activity of the educational leader as a part of wide and multi-professional networks* was emphasised. Educational leaders often work in multifaceted cooperation to promote the overall growth, development and well-being of pupils and students. This competence to successfully act and lead various regional and professional networks, actors and sectors was recognised in all projects. In one project, the research results showed that the role of schools should be strengthened at the municipal level and made more visible, for example, in welfare strategies. Principals were seen as key players in how schools participate in building and maintaining networks to promote well-being (see Chap. 15).

In two of the four projects, educational leaders' *competence development in pedagogical leadership* was underlined. For example, one project included sub-studies on educational leaders' understanding and enactment of pedagogical leadership at different levels of education. The researchers of this project investigated early childhood education leaders' perceptions of pedagogical leadership and their capacity to lead the implementation of the curriculum. The results indicated that leaders are highly capable of leading implementation, but more coherent guidance and instruments for assessment are needed (Ahtiainen et al., 2021). Furthermore, the researchers of this project employed the framework of broad-based pedagogical leadership to investigate principals' and teachers' understandings of the elements of leadership that will promote the implementation of the national core curriculum in schools. According to the principals, strategic leadership, interaction and competence management contributed to the implementation of the curriculum. The teachers emphasised interaction, being goal-oriented and a general understanding of everyday schooling (Lahtero et al., 2021).

Another project approached the *development of pedagogical leadership by developing its framework.* The main idea was that because of understanding and developing pedagogical leadership, a theory of the object is needed, such as objectives, tasks and activities in an educational institution and its pedagogical work, as well as an idea of the pedagogical aspects found in pedagogical leadership. Principals were seen as actors in a multilevel system, with leadership and responsibilities distributed across levels and actors. The theoretical framework can be viewed as a foundation from which an understanding of school leadership programmes can be developed continuously. In framing their approach, the project actors considered Nordic models for principal education and current pedagogical development lines in educational institutions.

In three of the four projects, it was emphasised that educational leaders should be *competent of leading a PLC.* This may include such areas as involving teachers in school development work (Eisenschmidt et al., 2021) and principals leading a multilevel system by distributing leadership, as well as building the education system's multidisciplinary pedagogical culture. One central area of PLC leadership is human resource leadership. In one project, it was found that educational leaders' competence in human resource leadership was strong, but the area concurrently caused challenges for them.

There were also *project-specific aspects in these four projects.* For example, one project aimed at the themes and development work of well-being, welfare work, a

broad network of municipalities, a multidisciplinary approach, a mobile application, a service design process, peer-mentoring and cooperation practices. Another project had a national and broad aim of establishing a multi-form and coherent holistic development for education in educational leadership. When building this entity, cooperation with three other key projects was essential and remarkable. Furthermore, a large network outside of the projects' staff was invited to discuss and create a holistic entity for education in educational leadership. For example, other universities, universities of applied sciences, trade unions, the Association of Finnish Municipalities, the Finnish National Agency for Education, and the Ministry of Education and Culture were members of this network, which will continue the discussion and development work in the future.

Support for the Professional Development of Educational Leadership

With the help of the second research question, it was analysed how to support the professional development of leadership in education. The key findings from the data included emphasising the importance of *flexibility* in supporting and acquiring leadership competence: It should be possible to develop one's leadership through both education and learning through work. The competence acquired in either of these ways should be acknowledged and supported:

> Education must, of course, be highly adaptable and, in a way, always stick to those current themes and contents. Everyone would also have an opportunity to develop and strengthen their skills during their careers. (P2)

> Every university that offers teacher education should also have leadership education. (P4)

In addition to flexibility, the interviewees emphasised that education should be *diverse, context-based, continuous and research-based*. Other central elements that support leadership development were *networks, mentoring and peer support*:

> It should be based on needs considering organisations and the national level, but also individual needs to develop one's competence. We must have a very flexible model or system that pays attention to diversity. (P3)

> Education should be carried out in continuous collaboration with the development work of one's own organisation or school at the local level. Individuals should not be taken out of their contexts. (P1)

> It has to be done with the help of research broad enough so that we can get a more holistic picture of where we are going and to what direction. (P4)

> Mentoring and peer support would be entrenched and seen as goal-oriented and work-related. (P2)

Thus, the interviewees saw that the professional development of educational leadership should be *needs-oriented* and consider the needs of different levels, including individual, organisation, region and society levels:

When we talk about this school development and management as a shared activity, it also means that teachers are closely involved in it. And that, in turn, means that we need to ask how teacher education needs to be organised in order to prepare for such shared leadership and school development. (P1)

We would like to have a continuum from basic studies to on-the-job learning. Also, regional specificities would be strongly involved in this. (P2)

All kinds of leadership skills and the development of leadership skills are needed. Then it is essential to be able to identify the needs of people, organisations and society. And then the structures, processes and practices of development support should be created for it; whatever the situations of the organisation and the person are, then the support would be appropriately offered to the precise situation where we are. (P3)

Thus, it was considered important to hear teachers and leaders who are working at these levels every day so that the professional development of educational leadership can support them as well as possible during their careers.

Towards a Multi-form Professional Development of Leadership in Education

Based on the analysis with the help of the third research question (with what kind of holistic development leadership in education could be developed), Fig. 4.1 was compiled. Figure 4.1 presents what kind of entity and what elements were identified as crucial for leadership development in education by the actors in four key projects. The figure illustrates how the actors in the four key projects perceived the professional development of educational leadership.

In the middle of the figure, there is an educational leader pursuing to develop his/her leadership competence. However, it is important to note that leadership should not be developed solely on the individual level but also, for example, on the level of a professional community or an organisation. The three partly overlapping circles in the middle of the figure (formal education in educational leadership, learning through work and flexible identification and acknowledgement of competence) illustrate the importance of building flexible bridges between formal education and informal competence development.

The arrows on the left side of the figure illustrate that formal education in educational leadership should be diverse and flexible, context-based, continuous and research-based. Three circles on the right side of the figure (peer support, mentoring and networks) illustrate three central supportive elements for leadership development. These elements can be, although not necessarily, related to learning through work. For example, an opportunity to be part of networks beyond one's own organisation is important for the professional development of an individual or a broader community: participating in networks and collaborating with them offers insights into differing practices, solutions, cultures and contexts of leadership.

Moreover, legislation and alignments (at the bottom) concerning competence and qualification requirements for educational leaders and financing made on
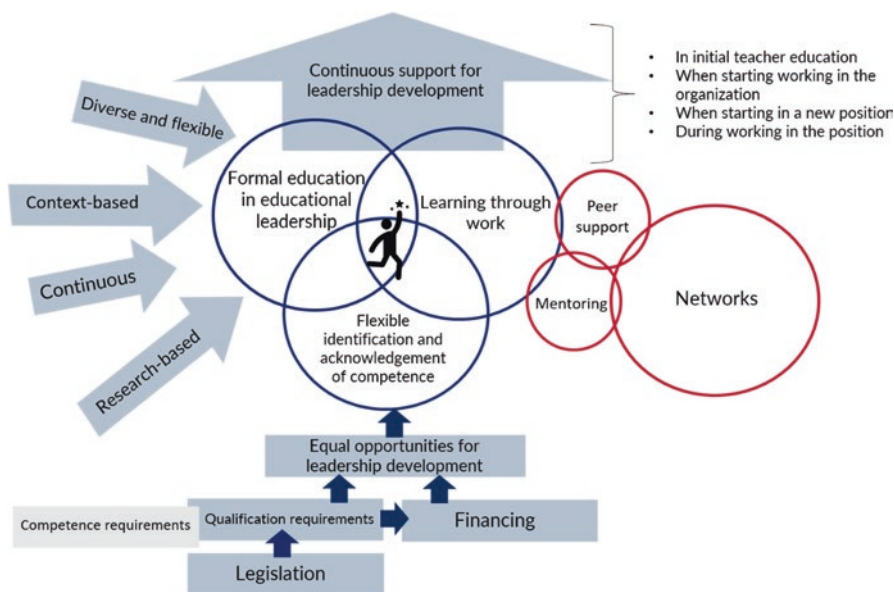
Fig. 4.1 Professional development of educational leadership

national and governmental levels regulate the structures, practices and opportunities for developing professional educational leadership. The aim is to create equal opportunities for leadership development at every level and in all leadership positions. Finally, the support for leadership development on both the individual and organisational levels should be continuous (at the top). In an individual educational leader's case, this means that support should begin in the initial (teacher) education and continue when he/she is starting to work in the organisation or in a new position and during working in position.

Discussion and Conclusions

In this chapter, we investigated the professional development of educational leadership. The data of this chapter consisted of interviews with the main actors in the four Ministry of Education and Culture key projects and the general project descriptions made by the projects' staff. First, we analysed aspects of educational leadership development. It was found that the common aspects of these projects were to investigate and support the educational leaders' professional development, perceive educational leadership as a phenomenon enacted by various actors and develop education in educational leadership. However, there were other aspects that occurred in more than one of these projects: emphasis on the specific context, the activity of

the educational leader in multi-professional networks, competence development and development of the framework in pedagogical leadership, competence in leading PLC and project-specific aspects.

Second, we investigated how the professional development of leadership in education could be supported. We found that the professional development of leadership in education could be supported with the help of certain characteristics and components. First, it was considered important to take into account the need for flexibility in support. Second, it was recognised that education should be diverse, context-based, continuous and research-based. Third, it was realised that we need networks, mentoring and peer support in professional leadership development. Fourth, it was understood that the professional development of educational leadership could be supported best when it is needs-oriented, considering and hearing the needs of various actors working on different levels in the education system.

Third, we considered with what kind of holistic development leadership in education could be developed. Here, the importance of building flexible bridges between formal education and informal competence development was recognised. Furthermore, formal education should be diverse, context-based, continuous and research-based, and leadership development could be supported, for example, with the help of peer support, mentoring and networks. However, the actors on the national and governmental levels regulate the structures, practices and opportunities for developing professional educational leadership. Nevertheless, the aim is to provide equal opportunities for individuals and communities at every level and in all leadership positions during the entire career, from initial (teacher) education to working in different positions. Furthermore, the holistic development entity should consider the synergy between various levels (e.g. governmental, local, organisational and individual) regarding the relationship of connectedness and autonomy between these levels as well as the various needs for leadership (development) occurring on these levels.

In summary, the development achievements of education in educational leadership and empirical results of these projects have responded in various ways to the needs of both educational research (e.g. Fonsén & Soukainen, 2020; Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021) and national educational governance (e.g. Alava et al., 2012; Finnish National Agency for Education, 2013; Kumpulainen, 2017). For example, the research results and development work of these projects have provided both theoretical frameworks and practical examples for the need to define and develop professional leadership in educational organisations confronting complex challenges and constantly changing operational environments. Furthermore, this kind of national and local research-based development work has modelled an experimental culture that is supported by national educational governance. However, this work is also regulated and guided from there, which also challenges the longevity and efficiency of the development work.

In this chapter, educational leadership was perceived as a phenomenon involving multiple and various actors (cf. Elo & Uljens, 2022; Spillane, 2012; Supovitz, 2021). Although the projects mainly focused on developing the leadership competence of the educational leaders, it was recognised that leadership is enacted

in cooperation and collaboration with PLC members, such as teachers, and the actors and sectors of the networks of educational organisations, such as various municipal actors. Thus, it was recognised that (formal) educational leaders need competence in leading in a PLC (e.g. Johnson & Voelkel, 2021) and broader communities and networks, for example, to build a multidisciplinary pedagogical culture together. Here, leadership occurs as a shared process and aims at expanding learning in educational organisations (Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022), which, on its behalf, helps to achieve the improvement in collective leadership and the collective as the enactor of leadership (cf. Morrissey, 2000, pp. 5–6). Collective leadership can help educational organisations to function effectively and successfully conduct their core task in the middle of the changes and development of their operational environments (cf. Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022; Risku & Tian, 2017, 2020). Thus, work for enhancing the development of leadership in education, conducted in the projects aimed at responding to the current (leadership) development needs of educational organisations (cf. Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021), including the need for supporting shared meaning-making, flexibility, resilience and innovativeness.

The area of pedagogical leadership, which was one of the aims to develop in the projects, is also topical. Competent pedagogical leadership supports educational organisations in fulfilling their core task, which is student learning (Elo & Uljens, 2022), by helping them to respond to the challenges and transitions of society, such as the digitalisation-related changes in (teaching and learning) practices and the recent increase in learning differences between students and weaker students' performance. Additionally, the emphasis on pedagogical leadership development in the projects is associated with the recent and current educational policy changes in education in Finland (e.g. in ECE and VET sectors) that have resulted in the need for improving educational leaders' pedagogical leadership competence (Fonsén & Soukainen, 2020).

One central aspect of the projects was to pursue developing educational leadership based on considering the needs of the context (cf. Khalifa et al., 2016). For example, regional and organisational specificities were seen as an important part of the contextuality of leadership. When developed in alignment with its context, leadership increases its capacity to respond to the needs of this specific context, resulting in higher effectiveness and success (e.g. Khalifa et al., 2016). The fact that the perspective of contextuality was highlighted in the projects was associated with the high autonomy of Finnish educational organisations (cf. Simola et al., 2017). This autonomy concerns both the leaders' organisations and training conducted in the projects, as well as the universities as the conductors of this education and training. As a whole, the fact that the support for leadership development in the projects was designed and conducted based on the needs of the local educational organisations speaks about the Democratic Bildung Discourse and the related culture of trust (Moos et al., 2020) characteristic for education in Finland.

When we think about what we have learnt in practice during these project processes, we emphasise the meaning of our cooperation. The limited resources in Finland have been gathered through the cooperation of these key projects, which is a tradition worth developing continuously. In the future, we aim to deepen this

cooperation and widen it with the networks involved in educational leadership. This is like the common supervision of postgraduate students between universities and the development and start of education in educational leadership in collaboration. In addition, this cooperation helps us to ensure that there is a continuum and possibilities to provide enough resources for developing education in educational leadership. In the future, it will be important to further develop education in educational leadership, for example, for the heads of local education and culture departments.

Through this kind of cooperation and community, it is possible to strengthen the development of educational leadership, nationally and internationally. This kind of cooperation was not amongst the initial aims of the projects, but it has added remarkable value to the process in terms of the future development of educational leadership in Finland. Furthermore, we hope that the descriptions of our processes and results can help both national and international audiences in the corresponding professional development projects and experiments taking place in their countries and educational systems.

The following analyses were conducted to determine the quality and credibility of the present study. In the content analysis, the two researchers conducted independent analyses. Subsequently, common conclusions were drawn from discussions. This adds reliability to the analysis. In a consensus-based theory of truth, people can create truth by arriving at a consensus (Patton, 2015). In addition, the use of multiple coders in the analysis phase can be seen as a form of triangulation. The interview method is repeatable because it is described in as much detail as possible, so it also increases the reliability of the study.

The limitation of this study is the small target group of interviewees. On the other hand, the interviews brought out a deeper picture of the studied phenomenon in relation to the professional development of leadership in education, and the interviewees were specialists in educational leadership. The interviews were mainly carried out as focus group interviews. The challenges of group interviews are adaptive answers, but they can also elicit deeper answers than individual interviews. The theoretical framework of the study reflects the studied phenomenon and thus supports the research findings. Despite the limitations of generalisability, this study provides important and remarkable aspects and views on the professional development of educational leadership.

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