

The role of the principal in process of change: Leading the enactment of the core curriculum for early foreign language learning

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this study was to examine the experiences and leadership practices of principals during a process of change and more closely in the enactment of the core curriculum for early foreign language learning. The curriculum changes came into effect in the beginning of 2020.

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews of six participants. The participants were principals of six different primary schools in two cities outside the capital area.

The data was analyzed using thematic analysis by identifying four main themes that consisted of multiple sub themes. The four main themes were 1) principal and leadership, 2) experiences of change, 3) participation in the curriculum reformation and 4) actualization of early foreign language learning. Through these themes the leadership practices and experiences of the principals were examined.

The findings suggest that the leadership practice of principals have a lot in common with principles of transformational leadership and that the enactment of the new curriculum for early foreign language learning was experienced differently in schools. The elements of leadership practice found connected to other research and literature in addition to the transformational leadership.

The resemblance between transformational leadership and leadership practice of principals evident in the data and the overall more positive experiences with the curriculum changes might have a connection and suggests for further research.

Keywords: Leadership, transformational leadership, early foreign language learning, principals, curriculum, Finnish education

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tutkimuksen tarkoitus oli tutkia rehtoreiden kokemuksia ja johtamiskäytäntöjä muutosprosessissa ja tarkemmin varhennetun kielenopetuksen opetus-suunnitelman perusteiden käyttöönnotossa. Opetussuunnitelman muutos tuli voimaan 2020.

Aineisto kerättiin kuudelta osallistujalta puolistrukturoituja teemahaastatteluja avulla. Osallistujat olivat kuuden eri peruskoulun rehtoreita kahden eri kaupungin alueelta, pääkaupunkiseudun ulkopuolelta.

Aineisto analysoitiin tunnistamalla teemoitellen neljä päätteemaa, jotka sisälsivät monia alateemoja. Neljä päätteemaa olivat 1) rehtori ja johtajuus, 2) kokemukset muutoksesta, 3) osallisuus opetussuunnitelman tekemiseen ja 4) varhennetun kielenopetuksen toteuttaminen. Näiden teemojen kautta tutkittiin rehtoreiden johtamiskäytäntöjä ja kokemuksia.

Tulokset osoittavat, että rehtoreiden johtamiskäytänteissä on paljon yhtymäkohtia muutosjohtajuuden periaatteiden kanssa ja että uuden varhennetun kielenopetuksen opetussuunnitelman käyttöönottaminen koettiin kouluilla vaihtelevasti. Löydetyillä johtamiskäytänteiden elementeillä oli yhtymäkohtia myös muihin tutkimuksiin ja kirjallisuuteen muutosjohtajuuden periaatteiden lisäksi.

Aineistossa ilmenneellä rehtoreiden johtamiskäytänteiden ja muutosjohtajuuden yhteneväisyyksillä ja positiivissävytteisillä kokemuksilla opetussuunnitelman muutoksista saattaa olla yhteys ja sen suhteen lisätutkimus olisi tarpeellista.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Languages bring people together and not only help them understand one another but also the culture of one another. Languages open possibilities by rendering foreign countries and cultures accessible and thus strengthen intercultural understanding. The ability to use foreign languages also enhances employability and mobility and in doing so improves the competitiveness of European Union economy. (European Commission.)

It has been the intention and policy of European Commission to promote multilingualism within the European Union. Together with the national governments the European Commission is working towards a goal to having all citizens learn at least two foreign languages and begin the learning of foreign languages at an early age (European Comision).

In line with the European Commission Finland decided in September of 2018 to begin the A1 foreign language learning in the first and second grades starting in 2020. These changes would place two weekly lessons of first foreign language (L1) learning into early grades and due to the changes everyone would start L1 learning in the first grade. (Finnish National Agency for Education.) By starting the L1 learning earlier the teaching aims to benefit from the children's natural sensitivity period for language learning and lower the inequality regarding language learning and selection (Ministry of Education and Culture).

These changes can be considered major as it causes many class teachers or language subject teachers to face a completely new situation. Whether it is class teachers or subject teachers that would teach early foreign languages in the early grades it is new situation for both as class teachers do not traditionally teach foreign languages in Finland and subject teachers have no experience with teaching early grades. This was also acknowledged by the Finnish National Agency for Education as 550 000 euros was invested by the government to develop language education and pedagogy and two million euros to the training of teachers in preparing them for the early foreign language teaching. A lot of

trainings were offered, and different material made available by the Agency to support schools and teachers in the transitioning. (Finnish National Agency for Education.)

As a leader of the school the principal is in the centre of the process of change. The work of the principal is focused on pedagogical leadership. Central to the job description is the fulfilment of the basic function of the school and thus the learning of everyone in the school community. Through leadership the principal ensures that the teaching and education provides good results and is executed in line with the goals of the organization. With constant process of development, the principal assures that school stays up to date. The principal has to be especially aware of the current processes of change and their impact on future. As a leader of development and change the principal keeps up to date with the changes of society and the general factors impacting the operation of school as well as the research on the field of education and filters and applies them into the school community accordingly (Finnish National Agency of Education, 2013.)

As a leader of the school the principal has important role in changing the direction of the school and developing the school to meet the requirements of the society. The school is tied to the society as educator of the people. It is not enough for the principal to only focus on leading own school as separate unit but he or she must be aware of the processes of change happening in the surrounding society be able to predict the upcoming development trends. (Ahonen 2001, 15.) The job description of the principal has become more versatile recently and the expectations from the outside have increased by a wide margin.

In addition, the tasks of the principal have increased as staff leadership, leadership of change, different problems of pupils and school premises along with many other tasks are also part of the job. However, the resources have not increased in correlation with the versatility of the job description. (Honkanen 2012.) The national core curriculum also guides the work of the principal as the decision-making and guidelines set by the principal must be in line with the curriculum.

Some research has been done on the role of the principal as leader of school and leader of change but not many focus on examining a specific change from the perspective of principals and leadership. Leadership trends and practice as well as school as organization are under constant change and therefore the leadership has also constantly been a topical research subject that projects the trends and times of the research.

Languages and language learning has been an interest of mine throughout the life and studies and leadership is a topic strongly present through sports in form of coaches but not so much in studies. As both the leadership of school and the new curriculum for early foreign language learning are topical subjects as well as areas of personal interest, I conducted my research combining those two and aim to examine the role of the principal as leader of school and leader of change and then focus on those aspects regarding the changes caused by the new curriculum for early foreign language learning. The study aims to identify different leadership practices connected to process of change and more closely to the enactment of the early foreign language learning and then view them through the lens of transformational leadership.

2 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

2.1 Definitions of leadership and management

As the research takes place in Finnish context it is important to examine the concepts of leadership and management as they are used differently in English and Finnish languages. According to Pennanen (2007) *leadership* is strongly related to relations and communication of people whereas *management* refers to things and processes. Thus, can be said that people are led, and things and processes are managed. Finnish language has only single word *johtaminen* that includes the aspects of leadership and management although sometimes the emphasis may be expressed towards either one. (Pennanen 2007, 83.) This makes it difficult to completely uniformly use concepts of leadership and management as they are often spoken simultaneously and are intertwined in the Finnish context. Sydänmaanlakka (2004) states that both management and leadership are connected to working with people, influencing people and finding an optimal way of reaching shared objectives. Thus, management and leadership should rather be considered an integrated entity than two separate areas (Sydänmaanlakka 2004.) In this research both concepts are considered to be connected and addressed as one phenomenon. As *johtaminen* appears more in clear connection with communication and relations of people than managing things and processes leadership shall be mainly used. The emphasis of this research is also examining the leading of people.

Leadership is a complex and widely studied phenomenon that is difficult to define unambiguously. Especially since the beginning of the 20th century leadership has been a frequent subject of research. Since then it has been defined in numerous different ways. According to Seeck (2012) *leading* is defined as action that helps in efficiently acquiring, concentrating and utilizing the physical resources and labour input of people to achieve a set objective. The purpose of leadership is to make individuals of different background, position

and influence work together within the organization's everyday work that requires co-operation in order to reach shared objectives. (Seeck 2012, 20.)

Ruohotie (2006) has defined leadership as a social process, that can be altered by the leader to influence the products of the organization as well as the cognition and emotions of the members of the organization. Leading is a process of influencing as leader must be able to change the cognitions such as attitudes, schemas or other knowledge structures of subordinates. (Ruohotie 2006, 114)

Leading is contextual and the leading practice is closely connected to the surrounding environment and culture (Nivala 2006 ,129). Leading is a communal phenomenon (Huhtinen 2006, 223). Leader is also serving the people that are led and thus should provide adequate working conditions and help bring out the best qualities in people (Juuti 2006b, 232). Leaders must be capable of shaping the reality (Juuti 2006a, 19).

Leading is closely related to authority and the justification of authority. Although all types of organizations include leading differences exist between them. (Seeck 2012, 21). According to Weber (1922/1964) there are three different authority systems. Authority can be rational-legal, traditional or charisma-based. Different type of organizations and systems rely on different kind of means to justify authority: authority of bureaucracies rely on rational-legal basis, authority of rulers often rely on traditional basis and authority of religious leaders often rely on charisma basis. In capitalistic society organizations are increasingly bureaucratic and their authority rely on rational-legal basis. All authority systems and the willingness to obey are based on the belief of justification of authority. Explanation for this belief is often complex. (Weber 1922/1964, 324-382.)

Litterer (1963) claims that organization is a tendentious social unit which existence is based on fulfilment of two conditions. First, someone must have a motive to establish an organization: it is considered helpful in reaching desired objectives. Second, an organization requires people that are willing to work in it. Normally they have their individual ambitions that they think are reachable

through the organization. To achieve shared goals the people forming an organization need to have the ability and will to communicate with each other. (Litterer 1963, 7.) Organization can be considered as a process where the purpose of the organization and the way it is organized is under constant negotiation (Huhtala 2004a). Function of organization includes shared objectives as well as controlling the activities and people to reach the objectives (Seek 2012, 22). Organization is a group of people systematically aiming to reach certain objectives by regulating the action of people and instruments (Wii 1974, 12).

According to Parsons (1960) organizations can be divided into four types based on their function in creating and sustaining modern society. (1) *Organizations oriented to economic production* are typically profit-making organizations that fund themselves. (2) *Organizations oriented to political goals* exist to allocate power in society and maintain order. These organizations are often funded by local administrations or government. For instance, officials, legislative bodies, police and military are such organizations. As banks allocate financial power through credit creation they also count as such. (3) *Integrative organizations serve as arbiter* and help solve conflicts between individuals and groups. Judicial system and parties aiming for common good belong to this category. (4) *Pattern-maintenance organizations* have cultural, educational and expressive primary functions in society. For example, schools and churches are part of this group. Occasionally organizations perform multiple functions but can be placed into one of these groups based on their primary function. (Parsons 1960, 44-47.) Examining leadership in context of school organization is the focus in this research.

3 PRINCIPAL AS LEADER OF SCHOOL

3.1 Leadership in school context

As mentioned earlier the definitions of leadership are strongly connected in reaching shared objectives through actions of the leader. These shared objectives usually refer to the objectives of the organization. Therefore, it is important to examine school as organization to understand what it aims to accomplish and what kind of leadership is needed.

Organization must have a basic function that unifies the members of the organization as well as justifies their association (Hämäläinen et. al. 2002, 129). According to Korhonen (2008) this basic function is usually based on historic, societal and institutional definitions or the leaders' definitions of what is the core function of the organization. Basic function includes the core purpose and operational idea of the organization, in other words the reason for its existence. Basic function is static and invariable as it stays the same although interests and leadership may change. Basic function forms the basis of operation, evaluation, and development of the organization. (Korhonen 2008, 37-38.) Basic function is acknowledged by everyone in the organization but ideas of how to best fulfil it may vary.

Ojala (2007) states that basic function of school organization is teaching and education. Like any organization school too has shared objectives, service function, division of work and operational structure. Society sets frames for basic function of school as it is regulated by national education policy and legislation. By law, the municipalities are responsible for providing education. The education policy of municipality influences, for example, the resources, economy, premises, and amount of education of the school. (Ojala 2007, 137.)

For example, Fullan (2003) presents the structure of school organization in three levels with different functions and levels of authority. On national level regulations, laws and national core curriculum are formed to set guidelines and boundaries. On local level municipalities form educational strategies, assess-

ment and development plans as well as the local curriculum. On school and individual level, schools and teachers form school curriculums, teaching strategies, working plans etc. (Fullan 2003; Huusko, Pietarinen, Pyhältö & Soini 2007; Pennanen 2006; Hellström 2004).

Hämäläinen et. al. (2002) claims that role of the school as civilising distributor of knowledge is traditionally seen as the basic function of school from individual's perspective. It was thought that in school the knowledge is "poured" into pupil's heads. The conception has changed, and basic function of school has shifted more toward supporting, guiding and providing tools for pupils to develop and improve their own learning skills. (Hämäläinen et. al. 2002, 129.) According to Mäkelä (2007) school also has a societal basic function in preserving traditions as well as being innovative trailblazer. In addition, providing general education, ensuring eligibility to postgraduate studies, passing on cultural inheritance as well as providing labour force for society are part of basic function of school. (Mäkelä 2007, 64.)

Due to the public, institutional nature of school, it differs from traditional company organization and therefore organization theories made for corporate life do not always apply as they are, yet for the most part school can be examined through general operational framework of organizations. Characteristics of bureaucratic organization, service organization and expert organization are joint in school organization. School is regulated and guided by laws, edicts and agreements as well as political decisions, which makes it a bureaucratic-hierarchical organization. Professional freedom and autonomy of the teachers give school latitude, characteristic to expert organization. School has functions that serve individuals as well as the society and thus to a decree it is a service organization. (Dornbusch et. al. 1996, 410; Eilertsen et. al. 2008, 300; Johnson & Owens 2005; Lehtisalo & Raivola 1999.)

As the leader of the school it is the responsibility of the principal to fulfil the basic function and shared goals of the school organization as well as possible. Due to the bureaucratic nature of school organization, principal must take into consideration national and local level decisions and education policies as

well as have good communication and co-operation between all levels to make whole organization work toward shared objectives. As school is serving society as well as individuals, in this case pupils, principal also needs good communication and co-operation between school and home. From leadership perspective autonomy and professional freedom of the teachers can also be challenging, for example in creating a cohesive work community and building a culture of co-operation. Leading experts is challenging because the leader has limited knowledge and therefore must believe and trust the expertise of the employees (Juuti 2013, 164).

3.2 Changes in job description

As leadership theories have changed and developed through time so has Finnish primary education. Echoing the democratic values in Finnish society, the highly bureaucratic and centralized education administration began to decentralize in the 1980s and municipalities started to gain more power and agency as education providers started to make decisions on local level (Aho, Pitkänen & Sahlberg, 2006, 118-119; Varjo, 2007, 89-90). Previously the role of the principal was mainly administrator rather than pedagogical leader (Nikki, 2011; Sarjala, 2008). However, changes in policies and organizational structures of school have, on the other hand required, but also allowed the leadership to change. According to Juusenaho (2004) the current legislation regarding the job of the principal can be described as action-based opposite of previous institution-based legislation, where principal executed strictly defined administrative tasks from above that did not leave space for principal's own agency or authority. Now local rules of procedure define division of work within the municipality regarding the arrangement of education which allows part of the authority and decision-making to be delegated to school level. (Juusenaho 2004).

Finnish National Agency for Education (2013) put together a taskforce that had several assignments regarding the job description, training and competencies of principals in Finland. Based on their report there is variance in the job description and required competencies caused by the differences in the form of education, school level, the size of the school and organizational structure. Nevertheless, similarity in basic function of institutions and different areas of job description as well as general responsibility for the functioning of school are all conjunctive factors regarding the job description of a principal. (Finnish National Agency for Education 2013, 6.)

Pedagogical leadership and the competencies it requires are central to the job description of a principal. Guaranteeing the fulfilment of the basic function of a school and the learning of all members of the organization are the core of the job description. The work of a principal must aim to the future and be objective and result oriented. With vast knowledge, constant self-improvement and development of leadership as well as the whole organization the principal ensures that the education stays up to date with the latest research, changes of surrounding society and trends of school culture. The basis of leadership and decision making in school-specific development is the successful combination of latest research in the field with the practical experience gained through daily work. (Finnish National Agency for Education 2013, 6.)

Furthermore, to fulfil the basic function of school the principal must also be capable of managing things related to economy, personnel and administration. Likewise, leadership regarding the well-being and safety of all members of the organization is an important factor and the principal has to view schools and educational institutions not only as quality learning environments but workplaces as well. (Finnish National Agency for Education 2013, 6.)

The pedagogical leadership consists of organization of instruction (curriculum work, preparation and execution of annual schedule of work and evaluation), development of school and leading the know-how and learning of all individuals and the whole community related to it, pedagogical networking (institutional cooperation), pupil/student welfare as well as fulfilment of the con-

ditions set in the collective agreement for public servants. Human resource management is also closely related to pedagogical leadership (filling open positions, substitutions, training, division of work, distribution of lesson hours, well-being of employees, development discussions). (Finnish National Agency for Education 2013, 14.)

Carrying out tasks set by rules of procedure, cooperation with different actors (committees, board of directors, steering group, parents' association), statistics and reportage are part of general administrative assignments of the principal. Strategic planning, development work, various evaluation tasks and briefing as well as having responsibility over different projects and organization of training are part of principal's job description. In addition, multiprofessional cooperation demands the principal's contribution. (Finnish National Agency for Education 2013, 14-15.)

3.3 Research on educational leadership

Role of the principal and leadership in schools have been researched from many perspectives. Pennanen (2006) gathered data from principals via survey-questionnaire and themed interview. He aims to describe leadership in school context. His research illustrates the perceptions of primary school principals regarding current situation, leadership of school and changes in the job description. According to contextual model the leadership of primary school is interaction of societal and interpersonal nature that reaches from micro to macro level. Current discussion emphasizes change and the importance of change and his research shows that the working environment of principals varies a lot and is indeed under constant change. Pedagogical leadership and leadership of change (leadership of people) were mentioned the most considering important topical aspects of leadership. Even though these elements were identified as most important principals spent 70 percent of the time managing things and only 30 percent leading people. Dealing with various problems and develop-

ment projects while managing everyday work can make the job scattered. Therefore, the increasing diversity and number of different tasks can make it hard to keep in mind the big picture and fulfill the actual leadership task of the principal. Principals felt that their job on school level is heavily dependent on decisions and guidelines set by legislation and local level authorities. Only 13 percent of the principals thought that the school level decision making has the most significance. (Pennanen 2006, 178-182.)

Pennanen (2006) also brings out the possibility that the choosing process of principals can furthermore hinder the leadership of change as most (76%) of the principals are chosen from the teachers of the school without any preparatory training (90%) regarding the job as principal before their selection. Half of the working principals (49%) did not apply for the job but instead ended up or were forced to it by extrinsic reasons. Shifting from teacher to principal within same working environment without actual desire for the job may encourage cherishing the old culture and operational models. (Pennanen 2006.)

Pätiälä (2013) interviewed principals to investigate their experiences of their own leadership. Based on their own experience, the job description of principal is seen as combination of institutional leadership, pedagogical leadership, administration, and leadership of personnel that overlap with each other. Role of the principal is diverse and requires consistent planning and time management. Importance of communication between principal and personnel was seen key in all areas of leadership as wellbeing of personnel was considered crucial for the functioning and development of the institution. Furthermore, self-leadership and shared leadership are necessary skills to effectively prioritize, organize and delegate tasks. The model of leadership in schools is shifting towards shared leadership that includes the personnel in decision making, planning and carrying out tasks. This new inclusive leadership model is a product of changing society. (Pätiälä 2013, 86-88.)

Korhonen (2019) used a questionnaire for teachers and principals to research what kind of tasks, skills and areas of leadership are considered important in the work of a principal. Her study shows that the job description of

principal is seen as very versatile and principal is considered as general leader of school that in the end is responsible for the whole operation of school. The fulfillment of the basic function of the school is the core responsibility of the principal. In addition, principal is seen as a representative of school, a pedagogical leader, a leader of people, a leader of development and change as well as a leader of administration and economy. Interpersonal competence and communication, problem solving and decision making, strategic competence as well as vast general knowledge and interest to educate itself in matters related to school were identified as important skills and qualities of a principal. Leadership of people and personnel, pedagogical leadership, management of things (economy, administration and values), development and enabling as well as organization of schools everyday routine were mentioned most and therefore considered the most important areas of expertise and job description necessary for a principal. (Korhonen 2019, 50-66.)

4 CURRICULUM REFORMATION AND LEADERSHIP

4.1 Finnish curriculum reform process

There are two legislative but three functional levels in Finnish curriculum governance system regarding curriculum compilation and enactment. The two legislative levels consist of national- and local-level curricula and usually the latter can be further divided into municipal- and school-level curricula. Therefore, there are in total three functional levels: national, municipal and school. (Tian & Risku 2014.)

Legislation passed by the parliament forms the basis of the curriculum system and its governance in Finland. The curriculum reform process starts with compilation and is followed by enactment. According to Basic Education Act (1998/628), the government starts the curriculum compilation by deciding

the overall education goals, the distribution of lesson hours, school subjects and subject groups. This initiates the curriculum reform process. Ministry of Education and Culture is usually responsible for the decisions made and obliged to collaborate with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in preparations for student care, early childhood education and home-school collaboration (Uljens & Rajakaltio 2017).

The Finnish National Agency for Education (former Finnish National Board of Education) makes decisions on the cross-curricular themes, guidance counseling, educational objectives, central subject contents, student care and core principles for home-school collaboration based on the government's decisions and the Basic Education Act (1998/628). By these decisions, the Finnish national core curriculum is comprised. (Tian & Risku 2014.) The role of the agency is crucial in connecting the Government and Ministry of Education on the policy level and schools and local educational authorities on the practice level (Uljen & Rajakaltio 2017).

The Basic Educational Act (1998/628) states that local authorities are responsible for providing preschool and basic comprehensive education to all the school-aged children within their municipalities. In collaboration with school leaders, teachers and parents, the local authorities have the obligation to compile and pass local curricula following the national core curriculum, other legislation and decrees. Alike the national core curriculum, the decisions on student care and home-school collaboration must be prepared in co-operation with local authorities responsible for social and health services. In addition, local curricula regulate the organization and provision of student care services. Therefore, there are variation regarding provisions of educational service and educational objectives in local curricula (Uljen & Rajakaltio 2017).

Annual teaching plan that determines how the local curricula is enacted during the school year has to be prepared by the local authorities and other education providers together with school leaders and teachers on both the municipal and school levels (Tian & Risku 2014). Students and their guardians must

be included in communication regarding the key issues of the plans (Basic Education Decree, 1998/852).

4.2 Principals' role in the curriculum reform process

Although the curriculum reform process at the national level is led by the Finnish National Agency for Education it is in practice an open process where all relevant stakeholders are closely involved. According to Vahtivuori-Hänninen et al. (2014) the core curriculum is defined in Finland as a national level document, which is the result of wide and active national discussion and the concrete collaboration of various stakeholders like national and local education authorities, representatives from industry groups, the union of municipalities, university professors, teacher unions, student unions and parents associations. Feedback and comments are frequently requested from teachers and other stakeholders to the different draft versions of the curriculum throughout the reform process. Thus, the creation of the new core curriculum is a dynamic process of interaction of various factors. (Vahtivuori-Hänninen, Halinen, Niemi, Lavonen, Lippinen, & Multisilta 2014.)

VAHTIVUORI-HÄNNINEN ET AL.

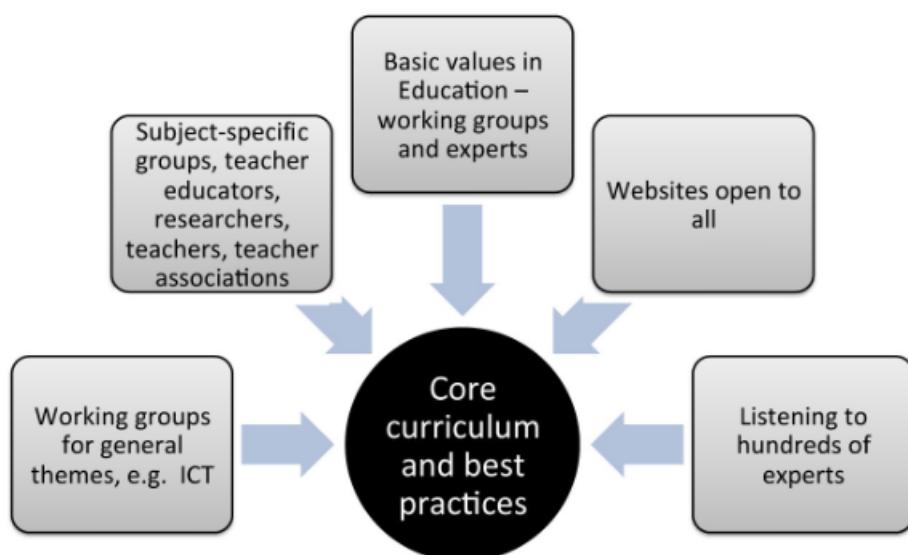


Figure 1. Actors in the Finnish curriculum reform process.

Principals as relevant stakeholders are part of the process but the contribution on an individual level can be very different. As the process is divided into various working groups belonging to one group can cause the focus of an individual along with the group to be on certain aspects of the reform process that the group is responsible for. Therefore, principals belonging to different groups may have influence and possess profound knowledge and expertise on different areas of the curriculum reform process. Furthermore, the role and responsibility within the group may vary. Some may not have a significant role or be part of the process at all.

Following the national core curriculum municipalities are obliged to form the local curricula that is based on the national one. Although, the core curriculum gives directions, the local education providers have extensive autonomy as the municipal curriculum is decided by municipal education authorities. The local level curricula have a lot of flexibility and is planned at the grassroot level together with principals, teachers, parents as well as local civil society organizations such as athletic and cultural groups. (Vahtivuori-Hänninen, Halinen, Niemi, Lavonen, Lippinen, & Multisilta 2014.) National core curriculum provides freedom and opportunities for municipalities and schools to diversify their local curricula as it includes nearly 180 issues to be decided locally (Tian & Risku 2014).

Although, it is possible to have significant influence over the local curricula at municipal and school level there are different practices how the process is done. Some municipalities collaborated and formed a regional-level curriculum and then moved to municipal and school levels, whereas others favored compiling only the municipal one with no regional or school level curricula. Nevertheless, compiling the municipal and school level curricula appeared to be the most commonly used practice. (Tian & Risku 2014.)

As the practices varied so did the participants included in the compilation process. According to Tian & Risku (2014) some small municipalities included everyone from local education authorities to schoolteachers in the curriculum

work. In contrast, some other small municipalities benchmarked the curricula of the neighbouring municipalities, thus restraining their own school leaders' and teachers' role in creating the local curricula. Larger municipalities might select a group of school leaders and teachers to join the compilation of municipal curricula but include school leaders and teachers extensively in the compilation of school level curricula. (Tian & Risku 2014.)

It appears that the role of principals in national, municipal as well as school level curriculum reform process has a lot of variation. This is due to inclusion of varying degree in national level working groups as well as different decision making of municipalities regarding local level curricula. Regardless of the role in the curriculum reformation process principals have significant role in the enactment of the curriculum. As leaders of the school principals are responsible for the fulfillment of the curriculum. Central to pedagogical leadership of principal is leading the clarification, realization and evaluation of the curriculum, school culture, visions, strategy and basic function of the school (Finnish National Board of Education 2013, 8).

4.3 Leading the enactment of new curriculum

New curriculum means new operational models, change of culture and adaptation. Change is not always welcomed with open arms and may prove to be difficult in the work community. Change comes with strong emotions like fear, anxiety, excitement and enthusiasm and principal has a key role in leading the change (Fullan 2001, 1-2). In times of change the transformational leadership of principal is emphasized.

Transformational leadership aims to cause such alteration in the social and cultural thinking of community that enables the operational culture of the community to change permanently into desired direction (Pennanen 2006, 34, 49). To accomplish change principal must possess profound knowledge of the processes leading to cultural change that are, the forces and factors causing change, the effects of change, the forces resisting change as well as methods to

control change (Helakorpi 2001, 161; Schein 1987, 329; 2004, 145). Principal must be able to commit the whole work community towards the shared goals, which requires working communication within the school community, collegial construction and sharing of information as well as willingness to share leadership (Helakorpi 2001, 161; Pennanen 2006, 37.)

According to Bass & Riggio (2006) features of genuine transformational leadership that aims for common good are universal and can be found within all cultures and communities. Transformational leaders display behaviours that can be categorized into idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. These are the four primary factors of transformational leadership that are often referred as the “Four I’s” of transformational leadership. (Bass & Riggio 2006, 16.)

Idealized influence is the first factor of transformational leadership. Often referred as or synonymous to charisma, all the behaviours that induce pride in followers for being associated with the leader belong to this category. Making personal sacrifices for the benefit of others as well as going beyond individual self-interest for the greater good of the group is expected of the leader. Displaying a sense of power and reassuring others to overcome obstacles is typical to a transformational leader with idealized attributes. They also tend to share and discuss about their most important values and beliefs as well as the importance of trust. They acknowledge the importance for strong sense of purpose and emphasize a collective objective. Leader who possesses idealized influence is often emulated by the members of the group or organization and considered as charismatic personification of the values and mission of the organization in question. (Bass & Riggio 2006, 5-6.)

Inspirational motivation is an essential attribute to the work of transformational leader. By highlighting the significance of the work (basic function of the organization), looking optimistically into the future, articulating a compelling vision for that future and providing adequate challenges a leader inspires and motivates the followers. In doing so an atmosphere of optimism, cooperation and enthusiasm is created among the work community. Transformational lead-

er genuinely involves the staff in discussion and planning of the development and future of the organization and through his own actions sets and example in committing to the common objectives and vision. (Bass & Riggio 2006, 6.)

Intellectual stimulation is the third category of behaviours and attributes. To harness a higher capacity of intellectual and mental resources of the workers and increase their innovativeness and creativity, a transformational leader stimulates them by encouraging them to actively search for new perspectives to approach previous problems and situations from as well as to question old customs and beliefs. Mistakes are not to be feared but are instead considered as natural by-product of creative and innovative learning process. The workers have significant role in generating new ideas and solving problems. Their solutions and visions are valued and can even surpass the ones of the leader if deemed more valid and functional. (Bass & Riggio 2006, 7.)

Individualized consideration is the final factor of transformational leadership. Displaying individualized consideration means making effort to promote self-development of the group members by teaching and coaching them. Leaders doing so consider and respect others as unique individuals and acknowledge and tend to their personal needs, abilities and ambitions. Such leaders attend to the concerns and needs of the followers and support their growth not only as members of the group but also as individuals. Transformational leader who displays individualised consideration is genuinely interested in the followers as persons and not only as workers. (Bass & Riggio 2006, 4, 7.)

Table 1.1 – Elements of Transformational Leadership (Bass 2006)

Behaviours and personality traits of leaders who display transformational leadership. The four I's of transformational leadership.	
<i>Idealized Influence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Induce pride in group members.- Prioritizes good of the company over personal interests.- Reassures others and displays a sense of power.- Shares and discusses most important values and beliefs.- Clarifies the collective mission.
<i>Inspirational motivation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Looks optimistically into the future.- Articulates a compelling vision of the future.- Provides adequate challenges to followers.- Involves staff in discussion and planning of the development and future of organization.- Creates an atmosphere of optimism, enthusiasm and cooperation.- Sets an example by committing to the common objectives and vision.
<i>Intellectual stimulation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Seeks and encourages others to seek new perspectives.- Emphasizes critical thinking and questioning old habits and customs.- Considers mistakes as part of creative process.- Values the ideas and solutions of workers.
<i>Individualized consideration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Supports self-development.- Coaches and teaches workers.- Consider team members unique individuals.- Acknowledges needs, abilities and ambitions of each individual team member.- Hears the concerns and troubles of others.- Has genuine interest in followers not only as workers but as persons.

4.4 Curriculum changes in early language education

The Finnish government decided in September of 2018 that from the beginning of year 2020 the weekly lessons per year in first and second grade would be increased by two. Those two lessons would be added to first foreign language (L1) learning. Due to the changes L1 learning would begin in the first grade nationwide. (Finnish National Agency for Education.) Earlier L1 teaching aims to take advantage of the children's natural sensitivity period for learning languages as well as to lower the inequality in language learning and language selection (Ministry of Education and Culture). Prior to the changes the usual start of L1 teaching was nationally in the third grade although it was possible to start it earlier. The changes not only put more emphasis into early language learning by shifting the starting point to the first grade and adding two weekly lessons per year but also standardized it. These changes were made after the latest curriculum reform (2014) and thus separate addition to the national core curriculum was made (2019) to cover the teaching of languages in the first and second grade.

The national core curriculum for basic education (POPS 2014) does not have a specific curriculum for foreign language learning in first and second grades. It states that foreign language learning usually begins in third grade and in case of starting earlier the instruction is to follow the core curriculum for language learning meant for grades 3 to 6 while taking the age of pupils into account. (POPS 2014, p. 127.) The added national core curriculum for early foreign language learning (VOPS 2019) defines the task of the subject, sets objectives of instruction and gives guidelines as well as requirements regarding teaching methods, learning environments, evaluation, differentiation, support and guiding of pupils for first and second grade (VOPS 2019, p. 25-30).

Although the core curriculum for early foreign language learning (VOPS 2019) is in line with majority of the equivalent for 3 to 6 graders (POPS 2014) it better identifies and acknowledges aspects characteristic to first and second grade language learners such as limited writing and reading skills, limited previous knowledge of the target language, possible first experience of learning a

foreign language along with age-appropriate contents and teaching methods (POPS 2014, p.218-219, 223-227; VOPS 2019, p. 25-30). According to the core curriculum for early foreign language learning (VOPS 2019) the emphasis and task of early foreign language learning is to spark positive attitude towards language learning, build self-confidence of pupils and encourage the use of language regardless of knowledge and skill level. The joy of learning, varying teaching methods, action based learning and oral interaction are central to early language learning. The topics and content of teaching should be genuinely interesting and close to pupils' everyday life as well as include pupils in the choosing process. Teacher has to offer diverse experiences of foreign language and its' culture and together with pupils observe and take advantage of surrounding linguistic and cultural incentives. Teaching first stirs up natural curiosity toward languages, then gradually increases interest in spoken and written language and eventually in writing and reading too. (VOPS 2019.)

In the national core curriculum for basic education (POPS 2014) the task of foreign language learning in grades 3 to 6 is to support pupils in their growth into plurilingual and multicultural individuals that are tolerant and appreciative towards linguistic and cultural diversity. Providing pupils opportunities to network and communicate with people around the world and to participate in authentic learning situations as well as preparing them to work creatively in cooperation within different groups and to actively interact in a global world are central to foreign language learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) can provide a natural opportunity regarding these aspects. In addition to developing multiliteracy and discussing diverse texts, foreign language learning improves interaction and information acquisition skills through building vocabulary and grammar. Foreign language learning should also have plenty of space for playfulness, creativity and joy. Furthermore, it should support pupils according to their individual needs and strengthen their confidence in learning and using languages. (POPS 2014, p. 127, 218-219, 348.)

Both the national core curriculum for basic education (POPS 2014) and the curriculum for early foreign language learning (VOPS 2019) set objectives (PO1-

11 POPS 2014 & VO1-10 VOPS 2019) for instruction that are divided into five areas. Objectives reflect the tasks set for language learning in both curriculums and therefore similar differences can be found. The objectives in the curriculum for early foreign language learning (VOPS 2019) focuses more on oral interaction (VO 6 & 10), group work and cooperation (VO 3), making most of little knowledge of language (VO 7), dealing with issues typical for early foreign language learning (VO 7) and keeping the language learning close to topics that pupils are familiar with (VO 6, 9 & 10). Instead, the national core curriculum for basic education (POPS 2014) has more focus on creating permissive and supportive classroom atmosphere (PO 5), developing written communication and interaction skills (PO 7), practicing text interpretation and producing skills (PO 10 & 11), learning to use linguistic communication strategies (PO 8) and using ICT in language learning (PO 6). Nevertheless, the objectives have many similarities as well, for example according to both curriculums, pupils are to be guided to recognize the linguistic and cultural richness of the surrounding environment and the world and the status of the target language in them (PO1 & VO1). Also, pupils are to be motivated in appreciating their own linguistic and cultural background and the cultural and linguistic diversity of the world as well as to encounter people unprejudiced (PO2 & VO2). Finally, based on both curriculums instruction should introduce variety of methods to learn languages and help pupils to identify and choose the ones that are best suited for them (PO 6 & VO 5) as well as help them to use language respectfully in culturally and situationally appropriate way (PO 9 & VO 8). (POPS 2014, p. 224; VOPS 2019, p. 26-27.)

Objectives set for learning environment and working methods in both curriculums are mainly in line with each other. According to both diversity, meaningfulness and cooperation are important aspects in choosing teaching methods. Methods should be a combination of play, music, games, drama and movement. The curriculum for early foreign language learning (VOPS 2019) expands a little more on the working methods and brings out action-based learning and inquiry-based learning as the basis for learning and diverse inter-

action, collective reflection, cooperation, linguistic curiosity and reasoning as aims of learning. It also encourages to find and build a variety of different learning environments by taking advantage of images, sounds, movement, different didactic tools, the whole school with its' surroundings and online possibilities. (POPS 2014, p. 225; VOPS 2019, p. 28-29.)

Regarding guidance, differentiation and support both curriculums state that all the pupils are to be given support based on their individual needs. Those having problems learning foreign languages get help and those advancing at a higher pace or those with previous proficiency are provided with more challenges. Pupils are also encouraged in learning other languages the school has to offer. (POPS 2014, p. 225; VOPS 2019, p. 29.)

Based on both curriculums the feedback of the teacher is to be supportive and encouraging. Through the feedback pupils can become aware of their skills and development. The evaluation should be diverse and give pupils multiple ways to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. In addition, self-evaluation and peer-evaluation should be part of the evaluation process. Finally, based on all the data and observations of the teacher either a numeral grade or a written evaluation is given reflecting the fulfilment of all the objectives of learning. There are also national criteria for good grade at the end of sixth grade. (POPS 2014, 225-226; VOPS 2019, p. 29-30.)

The new curriculum for early foreign language learning (VOPS 2019) sets guidelines for any foreign language instruction while the core curriculum for basic education (POPS 2014) also has separate section for English as first foreign language (POPS 2014; VOPS 2019). The curriculum does not specify what languages or how many different language options schools need to offer for pupils. Therefore, schools have the freedom to offer basically any languages for pupils to choose for their first foreign language, provided they have the resources to organize the teaching.

Resources being one of the main limiting factors, there is variance in the amount and diversity of languages different municipalities can offer. For example, according to the websites and guidebooks of basic education, the city of

Kuopio offers either English or German, city of Tampere offers seven different languages and city of Oulu offers six languages to choose from as the first foreign language in the first grade. City of Oulu also demands that every school offers at least two different options. In addition, all three cities state that in order to form a language group at least 12 pupils have to choose the target language as their option for first foreign language. (Kuopio 2021; Oulu 2021; Tampere 2021.) In bigger cities with more resources the question is rather how the resources are distributed and whether language diversity and foreign language learning is seen as valuable investment while in the smaller municipalities where resources are scarce it might not be possible to offer many options regardless of willingness. For instance, in the city of Tampere the development of foreign language learning and improvement of linguistic proficiency is included in the strategy of the city and it has already been invested in for ten years (Haavisto 2020).

According to Mäntylä et. al. (2021) teachers view that in addition to lack of resources, too high requirement for group size, lack of interest, lack of encouragement from home and arduousness of foreign language learning are other significant obstacles for diverse language selection. More earmarked money for municipalities and schools was mentioned the most when asked of concrete solutions to improve the language selection. (Mäntylä et. al. 2021.) Prior to the changes English was by far the most common choice for first foreign language in the first, second and third grades (Education Statistics Finland 2019).

Table 1.2 First foreign language choices – Education Statistics Finland (2019)			
Choices of first foreign language in the first, second and third grades of basic education.			
Language	First grade	Second grade	Third grade
English	57.7%	49.3%	90.0%
Swedish	0.9%	0.9%	1.1%
Finnish	5.3%	5.0%	5.6%
Other	1.6%	1.5%	3.7%
Total	65.5%	56.7%	100,3%

4.5 Research questions

The aim of this study was to examine the role of principals as leaders of school during a process of change and more closely in the enactment of the core curriculum for early foreign language learning. The study aspires to gain knowledge of the principals' role in the curriculum reform process, the actualization of early foreign language learning in schools, the challenges it may hold, and the leadership practice regarding the process. The research questions were identified and formulated.

1. How do principals view their role in leading change and what kind of leadership practice is tied to processes of change?
2. What is the role of principals in formation and enactment of the core curriculum for early foreign language learning?

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The context of the research

The context of this qualitative study was five primary schools (grades 1-6) and one comprehensive schools (grades 1-9) from two cities outside the capital region. The size of schools varied from 300 to 1100 students. As the early foreign language learning curriculum changes this thesis examines affect grades one and two only schools that include first and second grade were considered. There was no other requirement to participate in the study and the schools were chosen randomly.

It is important to note that four of the schools started teaching foreign language in the first and second grades along with the changes while two of the schools had already been doing it prior to the changes. Other school had started one year in advance and the second one had a long history in providing not

only early foreign language education but also bilingual education. Therefore, the answers of the principals from these schools can differ significantly from the answers of principals from other four schools.

The participants of the study were the principals ($N=6$) of the schools chosen for study. The participants were asked to participate by approaching them and introducing them the topic and the purpose of the study. Over 20 principals were approached of which six volunteered.

5.2 Collecting the data

As I started this study I had almost no knowledge regarding leadership of school and the job description of principal besides my own experiences as a student in primary school. Leadership and aspects related to it do not come up in the university studies of classroom teacher unless you purposely choose to make it your minor subject. Therefore, the research questions and the means to collect data were not clear from the beginning but have constantly adjusted as I have gathered theoretical background and simultaneously gained more knowledge of the phenomenon myself. While constructing wider understanding of the concepts of leadership, curriculum reformation and the job of a principal plenty of questions emerged. Questions worth asking the principals themselves.

The phenomenon of leadership as well as leadership of school is very multidimensional and complex. This can be stated both based on my own experiences as well as the theoretical background. There is no single correct way to be a leader but many and they all depend on the person leading as well as the surrounding environment. Thus, there is no single correct answer to a question concerning leadership either but many.

Finally, as the participants of the study are supposedly experts and possibly also well experienced in the field of leadership, the data collection method

was chosen to provide them possibility to express their thoughts and opinions as freely as possible within the boundaries of the research aims.

For these reasons semi-structured thematic interview was chosen for the data collection method. The interview was planned to consist of four themes that also included various more specific questions. The interview would follow the themes loosely but was allowed to bounce between them in no particular order as well as to head into unexpected directions provided it was relevant to the study. The more specific questions under the themes were guidelines for me to prompt the interview into relevant direction and also something that I was expecting might come up from the answers to then go deeper into. Probing with the additional follow-up questions, repeating the main points of the answer or asking for clarification were actively used in the interview to keep the direction relevant (Tracy 2013). The structure of interview questions as well as additional questions aimed to promote open-ended and complex answers (Tracy 2013). The four main themes of the interview with main questions were:

1. Basic information regarding job as principal
 - How much experience do you have as a principal?
 - How big is the school you are currently working at?
 - How much experience do you have as a teacher prior to becoming a principal?
 - How did you become a principal?
 - How would you describe the work of a principal?
2. Principal as the leader of the school
 - How would you describe leadership of school/yourself as a leader?
 - How do you encounter change?
 - How does school as an organization encounter change?
3. Curriculum reform process
 - How have you been part of national core curriculum formation?
 - How have you been part of local core curriculum formation?
 - How have you been part of core curriculum for early foreign language learning?

- What do you think of the changes in early foreign language learning?
4. Enactment of early foreign language learning
 - How is the early foreign language learning done in your school?
 - What has been the reaction of teachers to these changes?
 - What challenges has there been regarding the changes?
 - How were the teachers supported with adjusting to the changes?
 - What kind of procedures have the changes demanded from the principal?

After forming the interview structure, a pilot interview was done with a principal of one school in the same area as the participants. This principal was a relative and thus not considered as adequate participant in the study but provided valuable information and tips on how to adjust the interview structure.

The data was collected within a period of two weeks by interviewing the principals with this crafted interview structure. As was expected the answers of the principals brought up things that were both valuable to the research as well as not thought beforehand when forming the interview structure. Therefore, the interview questions were adjusted constantly as the understanding of the phenomenon expanded. Another reason for adjustments was my improvement as interviewer.

All 6 participants were interviewed and the duration of the interviews varied from 23 to 45 minutes. In total 3 hours and 39 minutes of interview data was gathered.

After the interviews and the analysis was done I as researcher noticed many flaws in the interview structure and questions. I compared the questions that gave rich answers to those that did not and noticed small differences that could have had an impact on the answer. Also, I was under the assumption that this curriculum change is rather major and trusted that the principals would have a lot to say on the matter. Therefore, I was not as prepared to prompt and push them as I was with some other sections of the interview.

5.3 Analyzing the data

The interviews were transcribed to text format and all possible identifiers in the text were pseudonymised. The length of transcripts ranged from six to eleven pages, written in Book Antiqua, font size 12, line spacing of 1 and a line break between each change of speaker.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the collected qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method of analysis was chosen as it allows identifying shared themes and patterns relevant to the research questions. Although the interviews were semi-structured and themed, they were allowed to head into unpredictable directions provided it was relevant to the research. Thus, there was variance in each interview data and this method allows to organize and gather it under common themes appearing in the data. The analysis consists of multiple readings of the data and through the readings aims to on the other hand build a bigger picture to understand the context of leadership practices but also point out detailed thoughts and experiences of the principals and thus also has characteristics of iterative analysis (Tracy 2013, p. 202).

The data was read through multiple times and each time the themes became more precise. Four larger themes were identified with the first read through: 1) principal and leadership, 2) experiences of change, 3) participation in the curriculum reformation and 4) actualization of early foreign language learning. These themes were color-coded and read through again. Each theme was identified with subthemes: 1) role of the principal, pedagogical leadership, shared leadership, transformational leadership, 2) nature of change, involvement in change, relationship with change, 3) national level curriculum, local level curriculum 4) attitudes of principals and teacher, challenges, support and leadership. The color-coding was readjusted according to subthemes but proved problematic as many parts were involved in multiple sub themes and would have required multiple colours and thus separate files were created for each main theme to organize the extracts accordingly. Although the interviews

were done in Finnish the extracts used will be translated to English for coherence as it is the language of the study.

It is worth noting that sometimes during writing of the findings I had to return to the original interview transcription to see the context in which something had been said. As I had formed separate text files in which I had gathered extracts of the interviews serving certain themes the context was not always completely clear from the extract. I think losing context is typical for this kind of thematic analysis and sometimes it does not matter or even serves the purpose of the study. In my study I wanted to present the thoughts and opinions in a way that would be truthful to the participants and therefore at times reviewed the context.

These themes appeared essential to the research and through them the research questions were answered. The findings resulted from the analysis are presented thematically organized.

The extracts used in the thesis were coded so they could be easily referenced in the discussion section without having to use the extract multiple times. The coding was done so that each principal had random code of HEA1-6 and every additional number would refer to specific extract from that principal. For example, principal coded as HEA1 had nine extracts used in the thesis so those extracts would be then coded as HEA1-1, HEA1-2.... Thus the reader can easily navigate to the corresponding extract and see what the principal had to say on the matter presented in the discussion.

5.4 Ethical considerations

The ethical guidelines and practices were followed in conducting the research (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 1997). The use and conservation of the collected data and personal data as well as the process of cancelation or withdrawal from the study at any time were described in the privacy notice (see Appendix 1). The privacy notice also informed the participant of the IKI-project that the study is part of and what kind of implications it has for the use of data

and the findings of the study. Prior to the interviews the participants were asked if they want clarification or have any questions regarding the privacy notice or the IKI-project. All six participants provided informed consent for participation in written form (see Appendix 2).

All personal data and other identifiers such as names were either pseudonymized or codified (HEA1-6) during the transcription of the interviews. Identifiers such as gender or age were not relevant and thus not used in the analysis. The original interview recordings and all other data containing identifiers were appropriately disposed as soon as the research process allowed it.

The principal provided data such as specific examples of projects and processes of change in their school. This data was not used as such in order to not pinpoint a certain school that could be easily connected to that specific project for example. Also, the presentation of findings and discussion was done so that even the gender of the principal or city in question were not mentioned.

Finally, this qualitative study was done in a way that leaves a lot of agency for the researcher in interpreting and analysing the data. It is the researcher that chooses the themes and extracts that seems to fit within these themes. While the extract presents one thing to the researcher it could present something else to another. As a researcher I focused on being as loyal to the participants as possible by trying to keep the context intact, while keeping the research questions in mind let the data guide me into choosing themes and not the other way around and illustrate what they actually presented in the interviews.

6 FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings of this study will be introduced. Upon analysis of the data four areas were found illustrating or explaining the aspects that are related to the process of change and in particular the change and enactment regarding the curriculum for early foreign language learning in the school level.

6.1 Principal and leadership

6.1.1 Role of the principal

To understand the phenomenon of change in school and the role of the principal in it, it is important to examine how they view their roles as leaders of school and build a context for the change. Change regarding the early foreign language learning is not disconnected entirely but all the changes in school are in some way interacting and resonating with the whole organization, community and the principal. In understanding the aspects related to that change we need to understand the ideology, views and values behind job of the principal and the process of change in school.

Based on the data the principal has various key roles and responsibilities in his job. First the role of a mediator between school, local administration and the government could be identified. As a principal you are responsible for the substance of the instruction that is based on the national and local level curriculums. Principal is to organize instruction that it is in line with the curricula,

norms, clauses and the Basic Education Act. Although guided with this framework the principal is seen to still have agency as he or she is supposed to use common sense in adapting to all different variables affecting his work.

But then again if we think what are the most important things as a principal now. Well, it is the substance of the instruction that is emphasized here, the clauses or let's say that the substance, what different norms and Basic Education Act and the curriculums say, the knowledge of that. But then connecting it to common sense. Because if we see that the law is only interpretation so the lawyers also interpret as we must too. We have the basic framework and then we have to trust our common sense to adapt. (Interview with HEA3-1)

As mentioned, there is room for interpretation and the framework for principals' job can be considered rather flexible. Different principals may have different views of what is important or crucial in their job or what is their role as a leader of school. Nevertheless, the data shows that principals have common consensus on many areas of the work. For example, the role of the principal was considered as facilitator by four participants. The most important aspect of the job is to facilitate the teachers and thus provide them conditions, environment and colleagues so that the working is meaningful, improving and inspiring. Because the principals see that it is not their job to tell how to do things and train the teachers to work in a certain way the training of teachers is more of presenting the guidelines and information regarding them.

My job is not to tell teachers to do things in one way or another. I may create certain guidelines of what I see and envision of where we are headed. I sort of bring the big framework. But the most important task is just to facilitate. It is my job to provide teachers conditions, environment, colleagues in such way that the work is meaningful, improving and inspiring. (Interview with HEA3-2)

We train ourselves a lot and of course the leader also trains the community by bringing those new structures and work methods. (Interview with HEA2-10)

When thinking about the role of the principal I in fact think that the most important task of the principal from the leadership perspective is to facilitate learning in school. And here I think not only the pupils but also the adults of the school. (Interview with HEA6-1)

Principal also has a key role regarding the atmosphere in the school community. Principal is the one single most important promoter of positive atmosphere and serves as mediator between the experts of the organization. School staff consists of heterogenous group of people and comes with a lot of different values and views that do not always meet. It is the principal's role to find common ground and solutions to this kind of problematic situations and thus relieve tensions that might have negative impact on the atmosphere of school community.

Then there is also the matter of atmosphere, what kind of atmosphere is brought. Someone has once said that the school resembles the principal. Whether people arrive there with smile on their face or what kind of mood. So, I want be a leader of such school or create such school where people are delighted to come but then again it is also extremely fun to go home. (Interview with HEA4-1)

It is most important that school staff consists of different personalities because the children are different. And then expert organization is the one that is not necessarily the easiest to be lead. There can be very strong views on things then they have to be mediated together [...] In a way the recognition of different needs of staff and how they can be met. In what point it must be stated that now the person sort of must be guided to act differently. So that is kind of big slice and from that also derives the atmosphere, whether it is supportive and do people help each other. (Interview with HEA1-1)

Wellbeing of the children as well as the staff was also considered as one of the principals most important responsibilities. It is seen as a topical issue that they must deal with. According to the principals the staff of school has room for development in taking care of their own well-being at work. The well-being at work was connected with being able to fully commit to working with the children.

Well-being at work plays a very big role nowadays and bringing that to consciousness of these talented people. Surely, they are aware of it but it is sort of one of the challenges in this field that how to control own, lead own work as a teacher or special needs assistant.
(Interview with HEA2-1)

I would say that leadership of staff in such a way that they have the courage, can act in that school so that they can really do that work with the children. That is probably the biggest. And there is one big factor in it, it is the leadership of well-being. Because if we do not have people at work then who is going to do it. That is often a thing that is hidden.
(Interview with HEA4-2)

Principal has a lot of duties and is responsible for variety of things within the school community but is also a member of that community. While the job has a formal side, principals often do not consider themselves as above the community and their work can include anything one can imagine working with hundreds of children on a daily basis does. One principal also emphasized the meaning of informal moments and conversations as important aspect of staff leadership.

Alright but then when the schedule allows and the situation presents itself then as well as anyone I can be the one who puts the plaster on the knee that has been cut during the recess. And then that is extremely rewarding that when the kid gets the plaster and is extremely happy about it. (Interview with HEA1-2)

I think that in the very centre of staff leadership is being together informally. (Interview with HEA6-2)

Finally, the data suggests that as a leader of school, principal is responsible for issues related to administration, economy and staff. There were different opinions as some principals identified these three areas as equally important and time consuming whereas others saw them overlapping with each other and therefore described leadership more as a bigger entirety. In general, administrative tasks were mentioned the least and their share of the workload was seen least important.

It is so that in this work if we think financial management, staff leadership, then just this sort of technical, one can almost say that it is one third each. (Interview with HEA3-3)

And staff leadership or let's say staff leadership and financial management, so I think that they are connected to each other. [...] They can not be separated but they are sort of joint conversation of where. For example, how much do we invest in lessons with divided group. And for example, is it possible to hire an extra part-time teacher. (Interview with HEA6-3)

Well, I, my principle is that I try to do as little paperwork as necessary. And I also do so that when you first encounter a situation. Some let's say resource management related situation then if it is possible to create an excel sheet then I try to do it as well as possible the first year. Sort of create that system and then it does not matter even if it consumed an unreasonable amount of time if it becomes so that next year we can just take this and it calculates the systems automatically next year. (Interview with HEA6-4)

As can be concluded the role of the principal is rather versatile. The principal is the leader of the school with a lot of responsibilities but most of all the principal is a facilitator for the staff and pupils to allow them to learn, work and improve and enjoy while doing it. The principals are also members of the school community and aim to make themselves easily approachable regardless of the size of the matter or the individual.

6.1.2 Pedagogical leadership

Pedagogical leadership was a term used by four participants in describing the job of the principal. It was defined differently by every principal but common consensus was that it included most aspects of the job. For example, administration, financial management and staff leadership were all mentioned in connection or even included in the pedagogical leadership.

We talk about pedagogical leadership and how it has too little time but when you think about what pedagogical leadership in just everyday life of school is. Well, it is that we

start through financial management to staff leadership, recruit right kind of persons in right positions or train people so that they manage them, we start planning the work-schedules of how the school days and weeks are constructed. (Interview with HEA4-3)

According to the principals, pedagogical leadership is about setting the framework and direction for the school. A leader must have a vision of the future and a goal. All the decisions and resource management are done in a way that support the vision best. Not only is it important that the leader has a clear vision but that it is also shared and made transparent with the whole work community.

And so of course another important factor is the pedagogical leadership. It is so that the principal shows the direction there whether we are going to be stuck or bravely go see what new is going to come. So, the pedagogical leadership is that we sort of make sure that through school the children are provided with the tools they need and that we also have a shared understanding of those goals. (Interview with HEA1-3)

And in the bigger picture the thing is that we for example have a clear direction. We are heading toward new school where adjustable learning environments are the border. There is not going to be any old classrooms. So, we have a clear vision of that. So, I have for example, said that all cooperative teaching that you come up with will be supported. And if we have a situation where resources are only enough for something and I have to make a decision of where, then those forms that support for example, cooperative teaching and solutions related to it. So those are the ones the scarce resources are distributed and then it is deducted from somewhere else. So, it is like this making of clear, clear guidelines. (Interview with HEA3-4)

In general, resource management was considered as important aspect of the pedagogical leadership. The schedule of work was seen as significant tool of pedagogical leadership in dividing the different resources accordingly.

Well, I say that the most significant tool of pedagogical leadership is the schedule of work. In that the resources are distributed, the groups are divided, the staff is divided, spaces, time. (Interview with HEA4-4)

It includes sparring of teachers and helping them solve different problems. Teachers are to deal with issues to a certain point and when the line is crossed the principal takes the responsibility of dealing with that issue out of the teachers' hands. Therefore, the pedagogical leaders deal with the toughest problems of the work community and carry the heaviest burden.

And maybe stir up if there is something that feels that can not be solved so that I could spar. Spar and throw some difficult questions, prompt. [...] Another thing that is pedagogical leadership is in the job description of principal the biggest that when there are these problematic situations. A pupil has challenges in learning or difficult parents so in those situations I am strongly present or try to support the teachers. Conversating, sparring, looking for solutions. Taking the responsibility. We sort of have a custom that up to a certain point teacher does things and then at some point I say that now blow the whistle, turn all the messages to me I take responsibility of everything, let's calm your work. (Interview with HEA3-5)

As was mentioned the principal takes responsibility over the hardest issues but it is part of pedagogical leadership that the teachers have a lot of responsibility for themselves. Some principals brought up term teacher leadership that described the autonomy, responsibility and leadership of teachers over their own work within the framework set by the principal. A pedagogical leader also shares responsibility and leadership by including the staff in the decision-making process.

It is completely different if I say that this is how it is done than if we begin to ponder in teams how to solve this thing that we have together agreed upon that this is how we do it. So, these are the sort of pedagogical leadership at its best. We put the pedagogues to lead their own work. I have been saying that in our school, in many different situations and development discussions this spring emphasized the term teacher leadership. Everyone leads their own work and own class and is the pedagogical leader in that common framework. (Interview with HEA4-5)

According to the data pedagogical leadership was a term that was difficult for the principals to define clearly. It was connected in some way to almost eve-

rything else they brought up on leadership. It can be seen as something that is underlaying and connecting all decision making and actions to allow learning of every individual in the school community and to steer the school toward the shared goal of the community.

6.1.3 Shared leadership

Due to the sizes of the schools the principals stated that it is impossible to control and lead everything by themselves. Therefore, it is necessary to distribute responsibility and leadership among the staff of the school.

The model of team leadership is completely clear. It has been a necessity to learn here that I am incapable. So, it is completely useless to think that I can lead, keep all the strings to myself. It is completely impossible. I do not even get so see the staff enough if they do not come here. If I had to meet 60 people over a cup of coffee every week, well everyone understands that if I circle there I don't get to do anything else. (Interview with HEA3-6)

The sharing of leadership was done in every school by somewhat similar team or group organizational structure. The principal coordinates the so-called leading group or planning group. Other members of this group were usually the leaders or members of each different group. Also, the vice-principal as well as the special education teachers and subject teachers were presented in this group. The teams other than the leading group were formed to serve a certain purpose and were given certain amount of resources to spend. The groups have freedom to act within the given resources and area of responsibility without counselling the principal.

Well, multidimensional team organization very very strongly and each team sort of have decision-making power. There are A) resources given. Euros in practice. And then very often when they come, maybe at some point came so many of those questions of what are we supposed to do. So nowadays they already know that when I answered that you can make much more intelligent decisions than I can. Just go for it. That if any laws are not broken and there are enough euros then go for it. So, there is that kind of very independ-

ent way of working and power and responsibility has been given way down in our house. So, that is my only way of coordinating. So maybe I coordinate mostly the planning group and then downwards from there the members of the planning group have responsibility over class level. (Interview with HEA3-7)

The composition of teams and the whole structure of teams is under constant change as involvement in some groups is compulsory and some are formed according to the interests of the members. The necessity and purpose of the groups is also evaluated from time to time and thus groups may be adjusted to meet another purpose or completely shut down.

Yes, first of all we evaluate whether all teams are necessary or not. There have been some teams shut down, there have been born new teams, there have been teams adjusted in a way the tasks. So that is examined yearly. (Interview with HEA4-6)

The small teams provide a possibility for teachers to have their voices and opinions heard that might otherwise get lost. According to the principals the groups have allowed for the shyer of teachers to participate too. The quality and amount of interaction is better in the smaller groups than in big meetings.

And then the planning groups meet once a week talk about things and then the members of the leading group serve as the chairmans of their own groups in which the conversation is definitely better in quality and amount than in some bigger meeting. (Interview with HEA5-1)

But then those quiet ones do not dare to say their opinion. And after I created the teams in that previous school too there began to really sprout many kinds of opinions and conversation arises in the smaller group and therefore, I think it is the best way to lead change as well. (Interview with HEA5-2)

The team organization is used to divide responsibility and leadership among the school community. It aims to involve everyone in the decision-making process and provides easier opportunity for the shyer members to par-

ticipate. It is also a tool for the principal to discuss certain topics and gather varying opinions from the groups. As mentioned, it can be a tool for leading change too.

6.1.4 Transformational leadership

The data shows that principals have different approaches in dealing with change but multiple similarities can also be found. The role as leader of change was considered differently in terms of involvement level of the staff as well as the responsibility level of the principal. Some suggested that while it is good to hear the opinions of the staff in the end change demands decisiveness and the leader has to be the one to push the change. Some considered change easier if you include the staff but also mentioned that the inclusion does not necessarily mean that their opinions are given weight. By presenting the change as something decided as a group was considered better received than presenting it as a principal. Some involved the staff in the decision-making but also mentioned that regardless of the opinion of the staff the principal will make the final decision. However, it was also stated that should the principal decide against the opinion a thorough explanation would be given as to why it was decided so.

But then again, I am the kind of leader who thinks that if every detail is to be discussed then the change sort of never goes forward. So there are things that principal just decides and then there are things that are good to be discussed. [...] It demands a lot of discussion and understanding and in the end demands that decisive advancing forward. So, every teacher has an opinion and if you start to listen and fulfilling every single opinion then the change never happens. So, after all the back and forth and listening and explaining it also demands that certain decisiveness that this is how we do it. (Interview with HEA5-3)

There are very little such solutions, that I as a principal, decided that are to be done this way. We spin it around so that we in planning group examined and decided it this way. And it can be in the background that I have made the decision, but I rarely use it so that I alone decided but we decided. [...] The worst mistake is that the principal says that This

is how it is done. It does not matter what is the thing in question, but it is the worst mistake that there will always be opposition. (Interview with HEA3-8)

I think that my role there is to sort of present the question what is it that we want [...] That way we make it part of the common discussion. And possibly I can organize a directional public vote. [...] But it can surely be, must be in a way that I can not as if to wash my hands of it and say that by votes 14-15 this won and now we go with this and this is what you voted. But of course, it is me in the end who makes the final decision and in some occasions it might be that although the vote would be 20-15 for something I would then still have some argument based on which I have to say that although this was your stronger opinion I have to do it this way with these arguments. (Interview with HEA6-5)

The heterogeneity of the work community was seen as a challenge for the change as there would always be those who oppose the change regardless of its nature. The power of example was seen key by many principals in converting these opposers to join the process of change. The example could be set by the principal personally if the principal taught weekly lessons along with principal duties. If not the members of the work community that view the change positively could be recruited to lead the process with their example. By presenting a working model with visible benefits the opposers would see the value of the change.

In the previous school you had to lead with your own example. It would not work there either that I say that hey now we start doing this here but you fetched overly enthusiastic neighbouring teacher and some other teacher from there as a colleague and a special education teacher and the companions. We started to do things and then it caught wind and we did things. (Interview with HEA3-9)

I think that in a certain way the change is led in the front but I think it is essential that nobody does it alone but you have to gather that sort of group. So, the work community must have this kind of agents of change that start to forward the change through their concrete work. [...] So, it is also organization of the change as in how to gather that group. (Interview with HEA1-4)

The opposition was not seen entirely as negative aspect but certain caution and healthy criticism toward change was also seen necessary. Not all the changes are beneficial or good and as enthusiastic agent of change even the principal must sometimes be reminded that change is a slow process and should not be dived into blindly. The principal should be cautiously sensitive to signals of change and strengthen the ones that are in line with the current education policy and curriculum.

So as teacher as well as principal I have myself been that kind of enthusiastic developer but in this job, in this role you have to also learn to sort of examine things with great patience. Sit on top of your hands so to speak and then as the signals of change start to rise from the staff strengthen those that are in line with our education policy or curriculum that we start to develop. (Interview with HEA4-7)

And I have often said that after all it is good that who would bear to be in work with themselves so if we would all be similar that would not work either. Those personality types that are sort of threat explorers that when something new comes they see ten possibilities to fail in it. So the kind of reaction toward them is important in my opinion. After all it is valuable to examine those moments and things that seems so that we fail at and then what can we do about it. (Interview with HEA2-2)

The roles of listening, and open discussion were emphasized as methods for leading change. Informal and relaxed discussion, encouraging discussion qand discussion that aimed to seek solutions were seen particularly beneficial for forwarding change.

But that kind of discussion that aims to find solutions is very essential in my opinion and that is what I promote in transformational leadership too that we must stop to think whether this is the sort of thing that we can affect or we can decide by ourselves so let's focus on that. Then there are things that we can not decide that it has arrived to us but we can affect, we have some room to decide how we address it. And then there are those things that can not be affected or decided and it is not worth using energy into when it does not take us anywhere. And then we have promoted here as planning group and I personally hope for such method of work that focuses on finding solutions and also the

importance of that positive discussion. It is so that a community strengthens in areas it discusses a lot. (Interview with HEA2-3)

Discussion and listening. So that you don't in a way throw people to the wolves but that when we have started something. A lot of that kind of informal. So as a tool is also that the door of my room is open whenever possible. So, you can come directly tell me if you are stuck or then also over a cup of coffee always for example like how are you doing?

[...] So, we should not make it too difficult but just talk and if some problems show up then we together think of what we could do about it and what can I do about it. Do we need some additional resources or something else to forward it. (Interview with HEA6-6)

Transformational leaders also encounter members of the work community individually and acknowledge their differences. People react to same things and same changes very differently and what seems to someone as nothing special may feel like a huge obstacle for someone else. Then again, some principals thought that although the community must support and seek solutions together, it is in the end up to the individual to choose how to participate in the process of change.

In a way I connect the staff leadership into this in such a way that if you give same task for everyone, it is not the same for everyone. For some it is really easy and for others completely impossible. So it must be adjusted to that sort of everyone's individual situation and readiness if you are doing that somewhere. But I think that the most important thing is the direction that we have decided that we are heading into that direction but the length of the step is the thing we can adjust. (Interview with HEA6-7)

And the way everyone joins the change. It is in the end sort of individual decision. Yes, the community must support, we have to, in a way think as a group how to do this. But there is also the responsibility of the individual of how it is dealt with personally but it is so in everyone's own life too that if you face any kind of changes in life it is you who carry the responsibility yourself. (Interview with HEA2-4)

Sometimes dealing with change can prove to be tough when the work community is strongly against it and the principal needs help from the outside. One principal was dealing with work community that had been through a lot of

changes in quite short period of time and the community was tired and even angry. The principal then held development discussions and mapped out the needs of the community. After discovering the needs, it was decided that help from outside would be of great help and a coach of change was hired to support the school community through the changes.

The community was clearly sort of tired and even angry toward that there are changes again so then I had development and capability discussions with the staff unit. I started to note that the community needs this kind of support with the change and so the human resources did well to give us a coach of change. [...] I think that this was the exact correct way of proceeding. [...] And it has been really very nice to get help from the outside. (Interview with HEA2-5)

Leading change can be a collective process of the work community, principal driven process or something in between. It often includes community members resistant to the change whose opinions and critical thinking should be seen and handled as positive asset for the process of change. It also includes members of the community that are eager to welcome the change and those should be harnessed as exemplary models. Change requires a direction or vision as well as guidelines from the principal but on the other hand allows freedom along those boundaries. In addition, it requires certain decisiveness and responsibility taking but also inclusion and sharing in forms of listening and discussion. Finally, community consists of individuals and they should be encountered as such with their personal opinions, needs and perspectives.

6.2 Experiences of change

6.2.1 Relationship with change

Based on the data principals consider the school organization to be slow or conservative in adopting new policies or changes but the direction is for the

better. Some also consider the slow pace a good thing as patience and critical thinking is healthy toward change.

Well, I think that school is like sort of an ocean-going ship that has a direction and when that course is altered it does not in a way happen fast. Which I think is good because the society sets demands or announces that school should do this and that maybe in an accelerating speed. (Interview with HEA1-5)

In my opinion the school world has started to change and it is like. The attitudes of teachers toward change and development are really positive. So from my perspective there are elements there. (Interview with HEA3-10)

Some see the relationship of school with higher administrative organs as problematic. The school level has changed and is under change and a lot of progress is happening there but there is lack of common consensus with the higher administrative organs. For example, the given resources do not meet the demands for change or resource allocation is too inflexible.

It should also be led that there are resources available if necessary. That in a way the school world and field has changed and is under change and its acceptable that we do a lot in our everyday work. But then I put it out there that going up the stairs from the school, it is not visible in local education authority or the local political deciders anywhere but in their election speeches. (Interview with HEA3-11)

Principals either considered themselves eager and fast-paced innovators or calm and critical observers. It was acknowledged by the principals that sometimes the fast pace can be problematic and the people in the community demand more time. Many also acknowledge the inevitable nature of change but also consider it as an opportunity.

My own challenge of growth is that I am evidently more fast-paced than maybe someone else. So that tolerating that as I said it is the five years so yes I have to remind myself often that we are currently at the year two or year three and I have to bother to say it 170

times, the same thing that I have repeated every year and it feels like everyone is already getting bored. (Interview with HEA2-6)

And it is so that the change is like a must but also an opportunity. And anyways we have to take it so that we keep our feet on the ground and we are critical. So not every change is as it should be. We also get such whims that it is like the heat of the moment and then it is forgotten. [...] Although I have been that kind of enthusiastic innovator as teacher and principal but in this role one must also learn to observe things thoroughly in peace. (Interview with HEA4-8)

One principal identified the connection of development and inventing with failing. Best developers are those not afraid to take risks and admit the risk of failure. The mistakes are opportunities to change course for the better.

Besides I am such a wack job that you must have courage to fail so that is how the best inventors are that they are bold to just go and they accept that this went south. And then we change the course from there. But majority of the group are not like that. It is nice to be on the comfort zone. (HEA3-18)

As mentioned earlier among the staff there are usually those who are eager to adapt to change and those who resist. Some can without hesitation start applying new methods and guidelines and try to always see the positive side while others can not even form an opinion without having time to thoroughly think about the matter.

Well, the first reaction people usually have is well, attack or escape. That is the basic starting point. (Interview with HEA4-9)

Well, its sort of law of nature that in every community there are also these sort of persons that support the change, some could call them agents of change and some something else, and who think that the change is a good thing. [...] There are a lot of these quiet thinkers who as if nods on it but for some reason in their role in the community do not show it or are as a person such that do not show or warm up slowly. And always need to sleep over night or nothing will come of it. (Interview with HEA2-7)

Many principals consider themselves as trailblazers when it comes to change and innovation. Some have a more peaceful attitude toward change or have adopted and learned one through the work. According to the principals the teachers are also divided into these two camps. The school is seen as an organization that adapts and welcomes change slowly but that is heading into direction with more possibilities. The cooperation of school level and local authoritative levels can be problematic within the process of change.

6.2.2 Involvement in change

Regarding the curriculum reform process principals in both national and local level had different levels of participation. Those who were actively involved in the reform process thought that the involvement has significant impact on the attitude of the principal toward the change. Being part of the process gives ownership over the change and motivates in actualizing it. Being part of the process and thus informed and aware gives authority and confidence in presenting the change to the work community.

And I feel that in during that phase probably the principals that were part of the curriculum steering group and the principals who were not that it affected a lot on how own the process felt. That I volunteered into a group in that phase. Just for that reason also that when you are part of the group you know what is discussed there and it is easy to carry the news to your own school from there. You have a finger on the pulse. (Interview with HEA6-8)

The significance of being part of the process of change was similarly seen important for the teachers. It was thought that the teachers would adapt to the changes better if they were involved in the formation of school level curriculum. By forming the school level curriculum in cooperation with the teachers using the same methods that were in line with the methods in the new curriculum it would be easier for the teachers to adopt these new methods as part of their teaching. Involving the teachers also faced some resistance on their behalf.

Then the school level curriculum was done for ever and ever. In cooperation with another school shared planning, training and workshop days were organized. All these things were done and different inclusive methods like small teams, bigger teams, work pairs, this kind of distance involvement and whatever came to our minds were used. Because we wanted that our curriculum process that we were doing would follow those work methods that were considered to be in line with the conception of learning in the new curriculum. So, when the teachers used those methods themselves, they would then also transform more easily to the teaching. [...] It was a long process and big process and we can say that it did not go without storms. (Interview with HEA4-10)

Therefore, it can be concluded that involvement in the process of change has a positive impact in the realization of the change. Compulsory involvement can also cause resistance but in that case, it is worth thinking whether these members of the community would resist the change regardless and battling with the resistance during that phase makes it easier to then apply the change with less resistance.

6.2.3 Nature of change

Some principals identified a difference between changes that come from outside the school for example, new guidelines given by the local or national level authorities and changes that rise from the school community. Changes given by authorities that principal nor the school community had no opportunity to affect were seen as the most difficult ones to realize whereas changes coming from the everyday experiences of the school community were considered the easiest and most natural to apply.

For example, some development thing coming from the authorities to the schools and we say that those are the changes that in practice never realize. But then thinking that we actually get a thorough grasp on something. In a way someone slips that by the way there is a thing that really works splendidly and there is that thing then those are the things that actually start to live and go forward. (Interview with HEA3-12)

Certain positiveness was connected to the changes coming from the school community and the positiveness was seen key to success in adapting to the changes. Sometimes the changes coming from outside the school community were seen negative, useless or even damaging and in those situations, principals considered that it is their role to mitigate the damage as well as possible.

I think that first and foremost the most important thing is that the change is experienced in a positive manner. If from outside comes some need for change that how to put it does not come from the everyday experiences of school but clearly from the outside. And that in the worst case scenario is not considered as useful then well if the situation is that for example decided by the city council something is to be done in a certain way then of course it is done in such way. And then as a principal I have to think how we can get it done so that it best fits in that so it in a way does the least damage to our work and work community. (Interview with HEA6-9)

Although there was clear difference between these changes coming from outside or from within the community there was also cases when the changes coming from the outside were considered useful and positive.

Yes, so such a change that comes from our own needs for example, I am thinking that although the Finnish Schools on the Move -project was a project coming from outside I felt that it was such content that our work community identified it as their own point of development and so as a positive change. (Interview with HEA6-10)

It can be concluded that it helps in realizing a change in the school level if the change is seen as useful and so the attitude toward it is generally positive. More often changes coming from within the school community are considered as such than changes from the outside. This can possibly be explained as changes coming within the community directly rise to answer certain problem or need whereas changes coming from the outside do not always take into consideration the situation of a single school and thus may not fit to meet the specific needs of that school. Curriculum changes are generally ones that come from the outside but there is also flexibility and room for local and school level decision making regarding various aspects and topics.

6.3 Participation in the curriculum reformation

6.3.1 National and local level curriculum

As principals identified the participation in the process of change was considered to have significance in the attitude toward the change. Therefore, it is important to examine the role of the principals in the curriculum reformation process. In the national level curriculum reformation process principals were either part of a certain task group, a commentator as presentative of the city or as a single principal or not participating at all. In the task groups the focus was usually for example certain subject related part of the curriculum. Sometimes the principal was participating but more so to keep up to date with the changes than actually impacting them.

Well, the national level work in the Finnish National Board of Education under the leadership of the board of the counsellor of education it was sort of expert work. We started to think in a way from the perspective of age and development of a child specifically those objectives and contents. It was like forming of the national core curriculum. (Interview with HEA1-6)

So, I have been commenting then as a team leader on behalf of the city some parts yes but I have not been part of the task groups. (Interview with HEA6-11)

But the participation in the national level was more like being on the receiving end that I was not those working groups. (Interview with HEA2-8)

Regarding the local level curriculum formation five principals were part of group focusing on a specific area of the curriculum such as evaluation, ICT or a certain subject. One of the principals was part of curriculum steering group that organized the whole local level curriculum work. The group work usually con-

sisted of reading, writing, collaborative problem solving and different inclusive methods of gathering data and opinions from teachers and principals.

Yes, that time in 2014-2015 what it was when this 16 curriculum was under the busiest phase of construction, we had this kind of principal teams of which I was the leader of one. [...] We had there a team of four principals and I served as the chairman and we were working on that section. And we included schools there as well as principals there and then finalized it with that team of principals that we had. (Interview with HEA4-11)

And I was part of the curriculum steering group of the city at that phase of the curriculum reform process. So, we gave a statement on the national core curriculum and then clarification came and together we pondered how to organize the curriculum work of the city and how do we take it forward. (Interview with HEA6-12)

As can be concluded the local municipality level curriculums were created in cooperation between principals and schools. Therefore, some schools and principals consider this municipality level curriculum sufficient and there is no need for school level curriculum. At school level it is only necessary to solve the areas specifically left for school level to decide in the municipality level curriculum. Some schools still formed own school level curriculums and the degree of thoroughness of the process varied from principal central to whole school community participation.

Now in this most recent we no longer formed them (school level curriculum) but municipality level curriculum and school specific areas so that they are no longer there with curriculum title but they are so to speak clarifications made in the yearly planning of own school. (Interview with HEA6-13)

Then the school level curriculum was done for ever and ever. In cooperation with another school shared planning, training and workshop days were organized. All these things were done and different inclusive methods like small teams, bigger teams, work pairs, this kind of distance involvement and whatever came to our minds were used. Because we wanted that our curriculum process that we were doing would follow those work methods that were considered to be in line with the conception of learning in the new curriculum. So, when the teachers used those methods themselves, they would then also

transform more easily to the teaching. [...] It was a long process and big process and we can say that it did not go without storms. (Interview with HEA4-12)

Based on the interview data the principal's role and participation in the curriculum reform process is smallest on the national level and increases moving toward local and school level. The national level reformation process is so wide that the role of one principal or individual can be rather small even if voluntarily participating. The consensus seemed to be that during the national curriculum reformation process the principals were eager to keep themselves up to date with on-going changes and discussion and then getting closer to school level their role would increase in the actual process by taking part in the groups forming the local and school level curriculums. The changes regarding the early foreign language learning were made after the actual core curriculum changes.

6.3.2 Curriculum for early foreign language learning

None of the principals mentioned to have had part on the national level curriculum process and only one mentioned being part of local level curriculum planning regarding the early foreign language learning.

It was discussed there where do we place that extra language and then also that basically there we formed a ten year transitioning period. So, in what way the early foreign language is brought forward in a way that everyone would receive it equally. And it still is moved around in our curriculum. (Interview with HEA6-14)

Some of the principals had experience of early foreign language learning experiments carried out by the city in some schools. It was thought that the process of early foreign language curriculum started already there and that the experiments and curriculums serving that purpose were the basis for the new official curriculum.

I have been in this city when early English learning first appeared then my previous school was the first school to take part in it. That time we started to speak of early English. So, since that I have been involved in it. In that sort of process. And now that it changed into A1 now then it is part of our everyday routine like totally normally. (Interview with HEA3-13)

One city decided to begin the early foreign language learning transition one year prior to the changes based on the good results from the experiments. And opposite to those principals that were part of the process the ones that were not included in the early foreign language experiments considered the transitioning problematic as there was no curriculum available.

Some of the schools in here have been part of the early English experiments. Our school was not part of it. Was not part of them. And then through the good results gathered from there it was decided to be expanded throughout the city one year earlier than it was decided to happen at national level. And it came to us early too and we began to ponder. But then we faced a problem as we did not have a curriculum completely ready for it at first. So, we had those early English curriculums and we applied them and so on but then in the end we got a local level curriculum for it. (Interview with HEA4-13)

Based on the data the interviewed principals had not been part of the formation of the curriculum for early foreign language learning on the national level. Some had experiences of early foreign language experiments, but others were not part of the process at all.

6.4 Actualization of early foreign language learning

6.4.1 Attitudes of principals

Four of the principals acknowledged language learning in general as very important and positive thing. Transition to early foreign language learning was also considered important and positive change that is beneficial for the children in their language learning journey.

Well, it is extremely positive thing. [...] I believe that the early English benefits all of the language studies from the beginning. (Interview with HEA5-4)

I see it as a good thing. Yes, thinking about the future, the prerequisites for language learning, the earlier we get to harness them and excite the children then it is certainly a good thing. (Interview with HEA3-14)

One principal suggested not being expert in language learning. This principal brought out being on the opposition and critical toward some of the previous changes regarding language learning. However, the attitude could be changed by being open to admitting having been wrong.

I do not consider myself very much as a language expert. So, I straight up admit that I had the wrong opinion for example, on bringing the Swedish to sixth grade. I thought that it is a mistake and unnecessary move made because of political pressure but I admit that I was wrong. (Interview with HEA6-15)

Although, it was the general consensus that the early foreign language learning is a positive and important thing some questions appeared. Some principals also identified that it is very sensitive period and can set the course into wrong direction by giving negative first impression of foreign language learning. So, it is important to plan and execute the early foreign language teaching properly.

But we must be very sensitive there too. That we probably have in Finland if we look at all the A1 English being taught then there are most likely pretty big differences. It can be so that someone experiences already in the first grade that A English sucks and someone thinks completely different and most likely majority thinks different but we have to be smart on how to handle it. (Interview with HEA3-15)

It was also brought up that the number of languages studied in the primary school can feel overwhelming to some and that is a topic that should be discussed more. This is apparent in decline of A2 language selections.

I somehow hope that there would be more discussion also on these A2 languages that also partially begins earlier. Earlier the A2 language began in fifth or sixth grade. Now it begins here in the fourth grade. So that too is early language learning. [...] So the language palette is quite wide already in the primary school and this is apparent in that the A2 language selections have dropped significantly. In whole city. (Interviews with HEA4-14)

It was stated that English has major role in the early foreign language teaching and that the language selection could be broader. Then again, it was also mentioned that the organization of broader language selection could be problematic for the principal.

The language selection in overall is regrettably narrow but then again from the perspective of principal I say that luckily we do not have like five groups because then the arrangement and organization would be very difficult. (Interview with HEA1-7)

Although, the transition to early foreign language learning is considered positive and important overall there are also some questions and critical thoughts toward it.

6.4.2 Attitude of teachers

According to the principals the teachers had taken the changes well and the atmosphere was generally positive. Most principals stated that nothing negative has come to their knowledge from the teachers so there should not be any bigger issues, but they might deal with smaller things without presenting them to the principal.

So, the teachers have gotten into this new situation and in my opinion, it has been quite positive and nobody has said that I don't want to. (Interview with HEA1-8)

I think primarily positively. So, the teachers have taken it like that kind of new additional challenge and so on. I have not heard anything like negative from there. And also none of those big challenges or things have come to my attention. So, what kind of struggles they solve in their everyday work do not necessarily each me. (Interview with HEA3-16)

There had been discussion with the teachers about the capabilities and the readiness of regular class teacher that had never throughout the career taught English. There were different opinions among the work community on whether a teacher with no experience would be qualified to teach English in the early grades.

But one topic that we have had discussion about is what kind of preparedness regular class teacher who does not teach English or has never taught English throughout the career. So, what kind of ability the teacher has, to teach that English in the early grades. And there were also some critical views in my school. (Interview with HEA4-15)

Another point of concern was the pedagogical approach considering the foreign language teaching in the early grades. There had been supporting but also critical views on the methods the new curriculum encourages in the early foreign language learning. Some saw the natural playful methods of songs, rhythms, riddles, games and so on as positive and correct approach but others thought that more literary approach should be taken. The principal itself thought that it

takes some time for the early foreign language pedagogy to find its footing and settle down.

The opinion of some teachers have been and I hope that it would be a good thing there in a way that the child, little child would not have that kind of fear toward it or some kind of thinking that I won't learn this but the things are in that phase sort of very natural. And through songs, games and rhymes we can sort of get the teaching to the backbone and some teachers have thought that after we start doing more literary work they have to sort of start from nothing. I hope that it is not so but that it is still as of searching for the pedagogical wisdom of how it is to be carried out. But in our community, there has been discussion and both views have been present. (Interview with HEA6-16)

From the data it can be stated that the reception has been mainly positive, but the changes and the new curriculum has also faced some resistance and critical views in the teacher community. The principals mentioned there might be some minor issues that the teachers deal in everyday work that do not reach them and this reflects the autonomy and responsibility of teachers as individuals that has also been emphasized in the interviews. They are the leaders of their work and are encouraged as well as obliged to problem solve issues to their best ability on their own or among colleagues. The principal would then provide help if the problem proves to be insurmountable.

6.4.3 Challenges, support and leadership

According to principals the early foreign language in first and second grade is taught by class teachers or class teachers with specialization in English. Then from the third grade a subject teacher would take over. One principal could not say whether it is the class teachers or subject teachers that teach English in the early grades in their school.

Yes, in our school class teachers, in fact we do not have English subject teacher at all at the moment but class teachers who have specialized or gone through the Juliet program teach it. (Interview with HEA1-9)

Yes, that I did not mention that in our school we have had it so that subject teachers are occupied with the higher grades quite well and I think I could not have afforded to have any subject teachers in the early grades. Still in the first and second grades the class teachers have done it. (Interview with HEA6-17)

Subject teachers. Except hey now I have to take it back because I am not completely sure of just that early foreign language teaching. I think they also have at least specialization, those teachers. (Interview with HEA5-5)

So, the early foreign language teaching was the responsibility of regular class teachers that either had specialization or no previous experience on teaching foreign language or in the context of these schools English. One challenge present in one of the schools was the lack of confidence in teaching English. The teachers were doubtful of their abilities and courage to use English in front of the class. The principal then not only encouraged the teachers but also clarified the simplicity of the content and methods to the teachers concretely. In the beginning of the changes teachers were also allowed to swap subjects so that one teacher would teach English for multiple classes therefore freeing the unwilling or insecure teacher to teach something else.

And I allowed there a small flexibility so that they swapped teachers so that you teach my class, so I teach your class something else. (Interview with HEA4-16)

The first thing that rose from was that how own, in a way doubting the sufficiency of own abilities, courage to use foreign language in front of the class. So that was something that required some support and help that hey it is going to be fine and you are starting from small things. That it is not the intent that we read the first Harry Potter there in English. But we start from everyday life, greetings and these very simple things. And then it started going so that the teachers gained confidence. (Interview with HEA4-17)

Another support need in the same school following the confidence issues was the lack of teaching materials. Although, not seen as a problem or challenge by other principals, materials were brought up as something that was supported

by every principal in some way. As the teaching methods suggested by the curriculum for early foreign language learning are mostly action-based the books are not a necessity. Two schools still had books but the variety of material support was wide and included for example, electronic materials, common material banks, different kind of support materials, various visualization tools and handouts. The materials were often acquired based on the suggestions of the teachers and by counselling the subject teachers and special education teachers.

Both the subject teachers as well as the special education teachers have also acquired materials for us. So, I remember having teams conversation and someone has pointed out there that this would be good material this would also fit well the early language teaching for the class teachers and then we have acquired it and they have told us how it works. (Interview with HEA6-21)

By principle a decision has been made that books are not to be acquired but we like to keep the emphasis in oral expression and playing and so on. So that we do not make it a real subject right away. Surely, we now have some literature available for the small ones but this is the direction we want to take it and the direction of the city as well. [...] Other materials have been acquired on suggestion basis. Those electric materials have been used. (Interview with HEA6-18)

The presence of language subject teachers was a form of support that was utilized by many principals in sparring and sharing knowledge with the class teachers teaching foreign language to early grades. This cooperation was also utilized the other way around and the knowledge of class teachers gained during the first and second grade was shared and discussed with the subject teachers in the transition to third grade. This way not only the information regarding English learning but the information of pupils as individual learners would carry on to the subject teacher. In one school it was even made possible that if deemed necessary the class teacher and subject teacher could teach English cooperatively in the third grade.

Then our two language subject teachers, other English and the other English and Swedish teacher. So, they went through with the early foreign language teachers of what the early

English teaching or now from the first grade beginning A1 English. What it could be at its best, so that it supports then there in the third grade when the language lessons grow and the subject teacher organizes the teaching there. (Interview with HEA4-18)

Occasionally we have had a situation in the third grade that for example, subject teacher has held the lesson for the whole class so that the class teacher has been allowed to be there or that the class has been divided between class teacher and the subject teacher. [...] It has been discussed how the teachers have wanted it and for example, that kind of third grade that has a sort of socially special group then quite often it has been the interest to have the class teacher there. (Interview with HEA6-19)

Finally, there has been different trainings and education courses available for the teachers prior to the changes and constantly after the changes. In one city every teacher even had obligation to take part in training of Jolly Phonics (teaching literacy through child centred approach to synthetic phonics) to teach English in the early grades. The Jolly Phonics training received varying feedback from the teachers.

Trainings and all, they are offered constantly. Surely, maybe more focused when it started to come so then it was offered more. Now it is like natural part of normal training selection as for every other subject. (Interview with HEA3-17)

It is these Jolly Phonics. But in our school, everyone has done it. Some criticised it that it is a little too specific finetuning of pronunciation that it presented. Many class teachers were a bit critical about it that after all with children you go on a rough level. (Interview with HEA6-20)

The teachers were given a lot of agency in how to implement the early foreign language teaching but it was encouraged by the principals to split the weekly lesson into smaller portions and integrate it into other teaching as small sessions. This was considered not only the most convenient way to do it but also in line with the new curriculum. Smaller sessions also gave more insecure teachers a chance to teach the language in a pleasant way. After all, we have to remember to set realistic expectations and be merciful to ourselves and one another.

Then, I have said it straight to the teachers that I hope that you do not have 45-minute English lesson once per week. Instead have small language sessions so that the 45 minutes at minimum is fulfilled. Along the week. [...] And then so that you do not need to do three quarters. It is a big thing on the threshold that you do not need to speak three quarters of English. But you can have those sessions. So, it is much easier to do ten-minute session than three quarters mentally. (Interview with HEA4-19)

But that kind of support of the leader there that you can do according to the means you consider the best as long as you do so within the borders of the sandbox. Yes, and then we have to be realistic and merciful to ourselves and one another so that someone goes to Rome by a plane, someone by a train, someone circles around Spain by a boat and so on but sooner or later everyone is there together having a cappuccino. (Interview with HEA4-20)

The principals provided support in multiple ways and most of the apparent issues were handled prior to the changes so that the teachers would already be prepared when the changes take place. There has been training available or even obligatory, materials have been discussed and supported and the knowledge of subject teachers has been harnessed. The teacher community has been heard and consulted on the matters and support has been provided adequately to the needs. The responsibility and autonomy of teachers has also been evident in leaving the minor issues for themselves to deal with. Principals have also been flexible and done exceptions to the normal practices of the school.

7 DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to first examine process of change from the leadership perspective in school context and then focus on the changes regarding the enactment of the core curriculum for early foreign language learning. The research questions were answered by analysing the voices of six principals. Through different themes a bigger picture was constructed of the different roles and leadership practices that principals may possess within the school community and in the process of change. Thereafter, it was examined whether similar or different roles and leadership practice is tied to the changes regarding the new core curriculum for early foreign language learning. The findings of the study were viewed through the lens of transformational leadership (see table 1.1, Bass 2006). It can be concluded that the attitudes and leadership practice of principals connect with the principles of transformational leadership in a lot of ways. Regarding the enactment of the core curriculum for early foreign language learning the connections are always not as direct and at times leave space for interpretation but can often be identified by reflecting them on the general thoughts of the principals. There was also less data regarding the leadership and changes brought by the new curriculum for early foreign language learning as it had caused no difficulties or challenges at all to some principals. Although the principals had quite significant roles in the curriculum reform process at the local level, none of the principals had significant role in formation of the curriculum for early foreign language learning and thus it was not possible to determine whether it would have had impact in the enactment at the school level. These findings suggest that the attitudes and leadership practice of principals has a lot in common with principles of transformational leadership and that the process of change regarding the new core curriculum for early foreign language learning was experienced very differently in different schools.

Based on the actions and attitudes of principals present in the interview data they possess many behaviours and personality traits characteristic to transformational leaders with idealized influence. First, such leaders induce pride in

group members and it could be said that the principals of the study not only saw it important but also as their responsibility to build a work community where atmosphere is supportive and positive and the well-being of the members is taken care of. (see also, Finnish National Agency for Education 2013, 6. & Pätiälä 2013, 86-88.) Therefore, it could be said that the principal wanted to create a community where people feel good and can be proud to be part of, the principal included. (HEA1-1, HEA2-1, HEA4-1, HEA4-2) Another characteristic is making personal sacrifices and going beyond own self interest for the good of others and the organization. This characteristic comes together in the emphasis principals gave to their role as facilitators for members of the community as well as in their willingness to set an example as leaders and carry the heaviest burdens of the work community. Principals always do everything in their power to facilitate others and absorbs the toughest problems of the community as their own. (HEA1-4, HEA3-5, HEA3-9) Principals also reassure others and help them overcome obstacles. (HEA4-17) Furthermore, principal is expected to share and discuss the most important values and the principals of the study considered that the school resembles the values of the principal and it is the role of principal to serve as mediator in merging the differencing views and values of the members of the group into an operational and cooperative work community. (HEA1-1, HEA4-1) (see also Korhonen 2019, 50-66.) Finally, the transformational principal clarifies the collective mission and as the data shows the principals considered it their responsibility to choose and create not only a direction and goal for the school but also the guidelines in within that goal can be reached. (HEA3-2, HEA3-4)

Some of the characteristics carry over and are present in the process of change regarding the new core curriculum for early foreign language learning same way as they are in everyday life of school and thus not mentioned separately. For example, the supportive and positive atmosphere and well-being of members of the community has an important role in this process of change. Being a proud member of the group can be challenged by the change as the change was often seen to divide community into the eager agents of change and

resistant opposers and then it is the role of the principal to keep the integrity of the group intact through releasing tensions and overcoming obstacles. (HEA2-9, HEA4-9) (see also Fullan 2001, 1-2, Helakorpi 2001, 161; Pennanen 2006, 37.) Although, the changes of early foreign language learning were received generally well by the work community some insecurities, material challenges and differing opinions on the correct pedagogical approach were present. By reassuring and helping the teachers to find solutions to these issues they would together overcome the obstacles. (HEA4-17) Overcoming obstacles can also induce pride in the members of the community. Principals' role as a facilitator of work community and establisher of guidelines and goals was apparent in the process as well. For example, the teachers were offered various options and possibilities to approach and execute the early foreign language learning as long as it was within the guidelines set by the principal. (HEA4-20) The opinions and suggestions of teachers were also heard and fulfilled whenever possible during the process. (HEA6-18, HEA6-19)

In addition to idealized influence transformational leaders also display characteristics of inspirational motivation through their behaviour and personal traits. Optimism of future is present in the attitude of principals as they believe that obstacles can be overcome in the community and that the focus of the community should in things they have influence over and not spend energy dealing with things they can not affect. (HEA2-3, HEA3-5, HEA4-17) Part of inspirational motivation is to create a compelling vision of the future and based on the interviews, principals saw it their responsibility to formulate a vision of future and through their decision-making and established framework guide the community into that direction. (HEA1-3, HEA3-2, HEA3-4) (see also Finnish National Agency for Education 2013, 14-15.) Transformational principal also challenges the members of community adequately to their individual abilities. For example, sharing leadership and giving teachers plenty of freedom as well as responsibility over their own work as well as decision-making of the community challenges the teachers to solve problems as well us inventing ideas and new methods. (HEA3-7, HEA4-5) Also, when facing a problem principal would

use sparring, difficult questions and prompts to help the teacher overcome the obstacle instead of providing straight answer and thus challenging the teacher to think. (HEA3-5) Furthermore, sharing leadership and including the work community in decision-making, discussion and planning of the future are characteristic to inspirationally motivational leader. All the participants mentioned having a structure for sharing leadership in form of groups designed for various tasks, themes or areas of responsibility. These groups could then directly affect the future of organization through their decision-making regarding the area of responsibility of the group. Principals also used these groups for discussion, consultation and gathering of opinions to help them in their decision-making. (HEA3-8, HEA6-5) Atmosphere of cooperation, optimism and enthusiasm of the community is a sign of transformational leadership. By being optimistic toward challenges and problems and extending this optimism to teachers through trust and confidence in their ability to also overcome obstacles the principal spreads the optimism and confidence among the work community. Certain consensus that nobody has to deal with problems alone and we as a community together can do this. (HEA6-6, HEA4-7) To create a cooperative and supportive atmosphere principal serves as mediator between different personalities, views and values of the work community. (HEA1-1) (see also Helakorpi 2001, 161; Pennanen 2006, 37.) To feed the enthusiasm of teachers the principal encourages them to invent and develop by expressing trust in their abilities and emphasizing creativity and pushing of limits while being open to their ideas. (HEA3-7) The transformational principals also dedicate themselves to the common objectives and vision. As the data suggests the principals thought that leaders should be in the frontlines and set an example for the community. (HEA1-4, HEA3-9) The decision-making of principal should constantly be in line and serve the long-term plan and goal of the school. (HEA3-4) Pennanen mentioned that sometimes the principal can lose the bigger picture as the amount of tasks has increased in the job of the principal (Pennanen 2006, 178-182).

Regarding the early foreign language learning principals were also confident and optimistic toward the changes and the challenges. When facing problems, the focus would be on finding different solutions and supporting the teachers. (HEA4-17) Actual specific long-term vision for early foreign language learning was not apparent in the interview data but it could be stated that the aim for principals appeared to be successful and functional teaching of early foreign language learning that is pleasant for the teachers and pupils. This was visible through the increased flexibility and bending of rules in for example allowing teachers to swap subjects with each other to make them comfortable with the changes and organizing plenty of cooperation between the class teachers and subject teachers up to a point of cooperative teaching. (HEA4-16, HEA4-18, HEA6-19) The challenges provided to the teachers regarding early foreign language learning were similar to other teaching as teachers are given guidelines and options but are in the end responsible for choosing and creating the pedagogical approach for their early foreign language teaching as they are the pedagogical leaders of their work and classroom. The support of subject teachers was seen very helpful in dealing with issues related to early foreign language pedagogy (HEA4-5, HEA4-18) The teachers were included in decision-making as for example the materials were acquired based on suggestions and teachers were heard concerning the cooperation and support needs with subject teachers. (HEA6-18, HEA6-19) As for the atmosphere of cooperation it was clear that the principals emphasized cooperation between subject teachers and class teachers teaching early foreign language and encouraged them to work together. (HEA4-18, HEA6-19) By reassuring and encouraging the teachers in overcoming obstacles the principal contributed positively to optimistic atmosphere. (HEA4-17) Providing tools, possibilities and loose boundaries for the early foreign language teaching could encourage them to invent and develop the teaching within those boundaries and thus feed enthusiasm of the teachers. For example, teachers were encouraged to use creativity in integrating the English teaching into smaller sections among other subjects and search, suggest and share any beneficial materials. (HEA4-19, HEA4-20, HEA6-18, HEA6-21) As has

been stated many decisions done by principals aim to facilitate the teachers in the early foreign language teaching and thus forward the change and show the commitment of the principal toward the shared goal that is the successful actualization of early foreign language learning.

Intellectual stimulation is the third aspect characteristic to transformational leaders. Transformational principal seeks and encourages the work community to seek new perspectives. According to data, by providing loose but sufficient guidelines for teaching and transitioning to new pedagogical practices or changes of the work community the principal leaves room for exploration and experimenting of different methods and solutions. In doing so the teachers not only develop and improve as individuals but also develop and improve the practices of the work community. It is also important that the principal encourages toward exploration and experimenting and makes it transparent that different perspectives and ideas are supported as long as they are within the guidelines. (HEA3-4, HEA4-20) Likewise, principal should emphasize critical thinking and questioning of old habits and customs. Based on the data principals identified opposing opinions and critical views as valuable assets worth examining. (HEA2-2) They also encouraged critical thinking and patience toward new and upcoming changes. (HEA4-8) Furthermore a transformational principal considers mistakes as part of creative process. One principal identified the connection between failure and development and stated that best developers and inventors do not fear failure but see it as opportunity to change the course for the better. (HEA3-18) Finally, it is characteristic for leaders capable of intellectual stimulation that they value the solutions and ideas of the workers. As all the principals shared leadership and responsibility and included the work community in the decision-making process as well as provided the teachers with a lot of agency and freedom over their work it is safe to say that they value the ideas and solutions of the workers. (see also Pätiälä 2013, 86-88.) One principal even encouraged the teachers to invent and develop ideas themselves by stating that they are more capable of doing so than the principal is. (HEA3-7)

Juuti also mentions that a principal has limited knowledge and has to trust in the expertise of teachers (Juuti 2013, 164).

In the transitioning of early foreign language teaching the guidelines were also loose and therefore allowed the teachers to explore and experiment. (HEA4-20) Open discussion and listening has been emphasized by the principals as important tools in dealing with change. (HEA6-6) (see also Helakorpi 2001, 161; Pennanen 2006, 37 & Pätiälä 2013, 86-88.) Discussion of critical nature was also present in the transitioning to early foreign language learning as teachers were critical on the readiness of regular class teacher in teaching English. (HEA4-15) As class teachers are faced with completely new situation old habits and customs are not their burden but instead the subject teachers were critical on the new methods of teaching that the curriculum suggested in the early foreign language learning. Some teachers had thought that using a lot of action-based and oral methods in the early grades does a disservice when later starting literary work with the language. (HEA6-16) The ideas and solutions of teachers were clearly taken into consideration regarding early foreign language learning. As mentioned for example, the materials and the nature of cooperation with subject teachers was decided to some degree by the teachers. Also, by giving a big role for the subject teachers in sparring, training and sharing their pedagogy with the class teachers the principals clearly trust in the ideas and solutions of the subject teachers in this matter. (HEA4-18)

Final aspect characteristic to transformational leaders is individualized consideration. Transformational principals support self-development. Based on the data there are trainings constantly available for the work community and that presents an opportunity for self-development through education for the teachers. (HEA3-17) On the other hand, things that were mentioned earlier like the encouragement to invent and find solutions as well as to share and discuss them with colleagues can be seen as self-development within the everyday work. Such leaders also coach and teach their workers. As has been mentioned the principals consider themselves as facilitators for the school community and the teachers as experts in their work. (see also Korhonen 2019, 50-66.) Also, the

nature of teaching is so that there are no right or wrong way of doing things and same results and goals can be reached in multiple ways. Therefore, the principals thought that it is not their job to tell the teachers how to do things but instead set guidelines. (HEA3-2) The training of teachers is more about bringing information such as new structures and work methods to their attention. (HEA2-10) One principal used the word of sparring in connection with helping teachers to deal with problems. By presenting difficult questions and prompting, the teacher would be challenged to solve the problem with the help of the principal. (see also Finnish National Agency for Education 2013, 14-15.) (HEA3-5) Considering team members as unique individuals is a trait of transformational leader. Principals saw the heterogeneity and different individuals as inevitable necessities and strengths of the work community. Because the children are very different individuals, it is richness that the work community has different personalities to meet their needs. (HEA1-1) In addition, transformational leadership demands that the leader acknowledges needs, abilities and ambitions of each individual team member. It was present in the data that principals considered teachers as individuals with different needs and abilities and thus the demands and time frame toward same goal would have to be adjusted accordingly to every individual as same task would be overwhelming to some and very easy to others. (HEA6-7) Ambitions of teachers were mentioned in the data and school as organization is such that professional career does not have many options to progress towards. Teachers might have ambitions such as improving themselves on their job but most likely the ambitions are outside work on other areas of life. Finally, the principal should hear the concerns and troubles of others and be genuinely interested in followers not only as workers but persons. All of the principals considered hearing concerns and troubles of work community as their job and being genuinely interested in the members of the community could be identified in some statements of the principals. For example, things like always having an open door or being always available for the community regardless of the matter, being there for the community in any way possible such as tending to wound gotten during recess or crawling under table

of the teacher to plug in cords. One principal also considered being together informally as one of the most important things in leadership. (HEA6-2, HEA6-6, HEA1-2)

As for supporting self-development regarding the enactment of early foreign language learning trainings had been made possible prior to changes for teachers to prepare themselves for the early foreign language teaching. Following the changes, the trainings are still constantly offered but now as part of normal training selection. (HEA3-17) In one city a training related to teaching phonetics to children was obligatory for all teachers beginning to teach early foreign language. (HEA6-20) As for self-development within everyday work same things apply as for any other subject and the encouragement to explore and experiment in the early foreign language teaching as well as to share ideas and solutions among colleagues can be considered support for self-development in that regard too. The principals' role as coach or trainer in relation to the changes was not very apparent. For most of the principals the phenomenon of early foreign language was as new as for the teachers. Therefore, the subject teachers were harnessed as coaches of foreign language pedagogy and issues related to it. (HEA4-18) However, principals were eager and available to hear any concerns and together with teachers solve problems and find solutions, but this further solidifies the principal's role as facilitator and not as coach or trainer. (see also Korhonen 2019, 50-66.) Teachers were considered as individuals and their needs and abilities regarding early foreign language teaching were met with adequate support. Those that found the changes easy to adapt were given green light to do as they see fit and the ones that struggled were given adequate support. The ones that had insecurities and doubts about teaching foreign language were given support in form of reassuring, discussion, listening and finding appropriate way of proceeding with the changes. (see also Helakorpi 2001, 161; Pennanen 2006, 37.) For example, some teachers did not have to teach early foreign language at all in the beginning, but they could swap it to some other subject with another teacher. (HEA4-16) As mentioned the principals made themselves available for the teachers to present their con-

cerns or troubles at any point they emerged. As for genuine interest in the followers not only as workers but as persons I think the effort and flexibility of some principals that faced problems to realize the changes in a way that teachers would feel as comfortable as possible is a sign of profound care.

This study shows that the attitudes and leadership practices of principals have a lot in common with the transformational leadership principles that are considered universal for leaders that aim for common good (Bass & Riggio 2006). It also shows that the changes following the new curriculum for early foreign language learning were experienced very differently in different schools. According to principals some schools had not faced any issues regarding the enactment of the new core curriculum for early foreign language learning and some had faced a lot of problems. Based on the data it could not be reliably concluded what caused the different experiences and variation between schools. One assumption could be that it partially depends of the principal as the participants were leaders of rather big schools and often stated that everything has been probably fine as no issues have come to their attention. There might have been similar issues in more schools as were mentioned if the principals were aware of them. One principal was not even sure if it is the class teachers or subject teachers that teach early foreign language in their school let alone the big picture of the early foreign language learning. Also, some principals and schools had attended to the possible problems and offered similar support already prior to the changes and therefore did not face the same issues during the process. Regardless of the experiences with the new curriculum the principals shared somewhat similar ideology of leadership practices in general as well as leadership practices in process of change. There were also some exceptions as one principal seemed to have differing opinions on various matters with the rest of the principals.

When considering the reliability and limitations of the study it must be acknowledged that there were only six participant and thus the results of the study can not be generalized but still offer valuable insight on the principals' role in the process of change such as the curriculum change for early foreign

language learning. The study also gives some perspective on the general attitudes and leadership practices of principals. There were also practical limitations like time constraints and not being able to do the interviews face to face. Tracy (2013) states that these are limitations typical for research utilizing interviews as a data collection method. The policies considering language education has a lot of variance between cities in Finland. The study focused on two cities outside the capital area and although the study offers valuable data on researched topic it must be acknowledged that the results could be very different if the study was done in wider area with more participants.

This study implicates that the transition to early foreign language teaching was rather smooth at some schools as according to principals there were no issues at all and quite harsh at some schools as they faced a lot of problems. Therefore, it would be interesting to examine the phenomenon from the perspective of the teachers in these schools and compare the results. By doing so we would not only find out whether teachers had similar experience of the change but also find out if and how they dealt with problems and challenges in the schools where the problems never reached the principal. The teachers could also provide insight whether they considered the support given by the principals adequate and sufficient and if not, what was missing. Furthermore, similar study could be done on a bigger scale or in different area of Finland to see if the results are in line with one another.

The changes were experienced in a mainly positive manner and there were rather few problems and no issues that could not be solved. As this was the case and a lot of connections could be made between the attitudes and leadership practices of principals and the principles of transformational leadership, I would like to think that there is a connection. By following the principles of transformational leadership, intentionally or unintentionally, the principals were able to pilot the school through the process of change successfully. This being the case other principals and other leaders could use this knowledge and implement the principles of transformational leadership in steering their school or organization through a process of change.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Privacy notice

Tietosuojalmoitus tutkimukseen osallistuville

2.6.2021



Tutkimukseen osallistuminen perustuu vapaaehtoisuuteen. Tutkittavan ei ole pakko toimittaa mitään tietoja ja osallistumisen voi keskeyttää milloin tahansa.

1. Tutkimuksen tarkoitus

Kyseessä on pro gradu -tutkimus Jyväskylän yliopiston opettajankoulutuslaitokselle. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksesta on selvittää rehtoreiden näkemyksiä ja osallisuutta opetussuunnitelman muutokseen, sekä heidän johtamistapojaan ja toimintamallejaan opetussuunnitelman käytöönnotossa koulutasolla. Tutkimus keskittyy opetussuunnitelman muutokseen varhennetun vieraiden kielten opetuksen osalta.

Tutkimus on osa IKI-projektia, joka on hallituksen kärkihanke. Projektin tarkoituksesta on rakentaa innovatiivinen kielikasvatuksen malli, joka perustuu ajankohtaiseen tutkimustietoon. (lue lisää: <https://www.ikihanke.fi>).

Tämän tutkimuksen aineistoa käytetään ainoastaan tässä tutkimuksessa, mutta valmiin tutkimuksen pseudonymisoidut tulokset voivat olla tulevaisuudessa osana innovatiivisen kielikasvatuksen mallin rakentamisessa.

2. Henkilötietojen käsittelyn oikeudellinen peruste tutkimuksessa ja arkistoinnissa

Eu:n yleinen tietosuoja-asetus, artikla 6, kohta 1.

Tutkittavan suostumus.

3. Tutkimuksen vastuuhenkilöt

Tutkimuksen tekijä:

Mikko Nenonen

+358400773380

mikko.o.nenonen@student.jyu.fi

Tutkimuksen ohjaaja:

Josephine Moate

+358408053350

josephine.m.moate@student.jyu.fi

4. Tutkimuksen toteuttaminen käytännössä

Aineistonkeruu tapahtuu eri koulujen rehtoreiden kanssa toteutettavien nauhoitettavien teemahaastattelujen avulla. Haastattelujen teemat pyörivät varhennetun kielten opetuksen opetussuunnitelman muutoksen ympärillä. Kysymykset koskevat esimerkiksi rehtoreiden osallisuutta ja suhtautumista opetus-suunnitelman muutokseen, sekä heidän johtamistapojaan ja toimintamalleja muutoksen toteuttamisessa koulutasolla. Haastattelut ovat melko vapaamuotoisia ja haastateltavilla on siten mahdollisuus tuoda esiin näkökulmia ja ajatuksia myös teemojen ulkopuolelta.

Tunnistetietoina tutkimuksessa käytetään ainoastaan pseudonymisoituja nimiä (nimiä, jotka on muutettu muotoon, jossa tutkimushenkilötä ei ole mahdollista

tunnistaa). Nimien pseudonymisointi tapahtuu heti aineistonkeruun jälkeen. Muita tunnistetietoja, kuten sukupuolta tai ikää ei tutkimukseen osallistujilta kerätä. Heti kun nauhoitetut haastattelut on litteroitu kirjalliseen muotoon, ne hävitetään asianmukaisesti.

5. Henkilötietojen suojaaminen

Kaikkia tutkimuksessa kerättyjä tietoja ja tutkimustulosia käsitellään luottamuksellisesti tietosuojalainsäädännön edellyttämällä tavalla. Tutkimukseen liittyvistä tutkimustulosista, selvityksistä tai julkaisuista ei voida tunnistaa kenenkään tutkimukseen osallistuvan tietoja. Suorien sitaattien käyttö tutkimuksessa on mahdollista.

Tutkimuksen tekovaiheessa aineisto muokataan mahdollisimman nopeasti muotoon, jossa ei ole tunnistettavia henkilötietoja. Tämä tapahtuu esimerkiksi litteroimalla haastattelut tekstimuotoon ja pseudonymisoimalla tutkimushenkilöt. Aineiston säilytys tapahtuu paikallisesti ja salasanalla suojustusti niin, ettei ulkopuolisilla ole pääsyä tutkimuksen tietoihin.

Tutkimushenkilöihin viitataan tutkimustulosissa ja muissa asiakirjoissa ainostaan pseudonymillä, eli keksityllä nimellä, jota ei ole mahdollista yhdistää tutkimushenkilöön.

Tutkimusaineiston säilytys tapahtuu Jyväskylän yliopiston tutkimusaineistoon liittyvien tietoturvakäytäntöiden mukaisesti.

Tutkimuksen tuloksia käytetään vain tässä tutkimuksessa, mutta valmiin tutkimuksen pseudonymisoidut tulokset ovat mahdollisesti osana tulevaisuudessa julkaistavaa isompaa kokonaisuutta innovatiivisen kielikasvatuksen mallin rakentamisessa.

6. Tutkittavan oikeudet ja oikeksista poikkeaminen

Henkilötietojen käsitteily perustuu suostumukseen ja tutkittavalla on oikeus peruuttaa antamansa suostumus. Tutkittavan perussa suostumuksensa, hänen tietojaan ei enää käytetä tutkimuksessa.

Jos tutkittava kokee, että häntä koskevien henkilötietojen käsitellyssä on rikottu voimassa olevaa tietosuojalainsäädäntöä, (lue lisää: <https://www.tietosuoja.fi>) on hänellä oikeus tehdä valitus Tietosuojaavaltuutetun toimistoon.

Muista tietosuojalainsäädännön mukaisista oikeksista ei tutkimuksessa poiketa.

7. Henkilötietojen säilyttäminen ja arkistointi

Tutkimuksessa käytettäviä henkilötietoja ja aineistoa ei säilytetä, kuin tutkimuksen tekemisen edellyttämä aika. Tämän jälkeen pseudonymisoitu aineisto hävitetään asiaankuuluulla tavalla. Tutkimusaineiston säilytys tapahtuu Jyväskylän yliopiston tutkimusaineistoon liittyvien tietoturvakäytänteiden mukaisesti ja on käytössä vain tässä tutkimuksessa.

Mikäli sinulla on kysyttävää rekisteröidyn oikeksista, ota yhteyttä tutkimuksen tekijään.

Appendix 2. Form for informed consent



Jyväskylän yliopisto

Suostumus tieteelliseen tutkimukseen

Olen perehtynyt tutkimusta koskevaan tiedotteeseen (tietosuojailemoitus) ja saanut riittävästi tietoa tutkimuksesta sekä henkilötietojeni käsittelystä. Tutkimuksen sisältö on kerrottu minulle myös suullisesti ja olen saanut vastauksen kaikkiin tutkimusta koskeviin kysymyksiini. Selvitykset antoi Mikko Nenonen. Minulla on ollut riittävästi aikaa harkita tutkimukseen osallistumista.

Ymmärrän, että tähän tutkimukseen osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista. Minulla on oikeus, milloin tahansa tutkimuksen aikana ja syytä ilmoittamatta keskeyttää tutkimukseen osallistuminen. Tutkimuksen keskeyttämisestä ei aiheudu minulle kielteisiä seuraamuksia.

Olen tutustunut tietosuojailemuukseen ja siinä kerrottuihin rekisteröidyn oikeuksiin ja rajoituksiin.

Allekirjoittamalla suostumuslomakkeen hyväksyn henkilötietojeni käsittelyn tietosuojailemuksessa kuvattuun tutkimukseen.

Kyllä

Allekirjoituksellani vahvistan, että osallistun tutkimukseen ja suostun vapaaehtoisten tutkittavaksi sekä annan luvan edellä kerrottuihinasioihin.

Allekirjoitus

Päiväys

Nimen selvennys

Syntymääika

Osoite

Suostumus vastaanotettu

Suostumuksen vastaanottajan allekirjoitus

Päiväys

Nimen selvennys

Alkuperäinen allekirjoitettu suostumus jää tutkimuksen vastuullisen johtajan arkistoon ja kopio annetaan tutkittavalle. Suostumusta säilytetään tietoturvallisesti niin kauan kuin aineisto on tunnisteellisessa muodossa. Jos aineisto anonymisoidaan tai hävitetään suostumusta ei tarvitse enää säilyttää.