Higher Education Leadership in the Light of Non-Affirmative Discursive Education – Theoretical Developments and Empirical Observations

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Introduction

As demonstrated by previous empirical research (Tigerstedt, 2015), educational issues do not appear as a foreground topic in international higher education (HE) leadership discourse. In order to contribute to educational leadership research in this field, this article articulates a theoretical position and reports empirical findings on HE rectors’ educational leadership in Finland as perceived by the rectors themselves. More specifically, the aim is to analyze how educational leadership is constituted and acted out by these higher education leaders. By focusing policy enactment as a critical mediating practice, the activities of the HE rectors are conceptualized as discursive in nature (Schmidt, 2008; Uljens & Ylimaki, 2015). Further, the study is based on non-affirmative education theory (Benner, 1991; Uljens 2002).

Previous research

The field of higher education is very much an interdisciplinary one. Research has often combined theories from e.g. sociology, psychology and policy research (Maassen, 2003; Tight, 2000). As regards the combination of theories we do connect different approaches, but the point of departure consists in viewing educational leadership as an educational issue, i.e. building the treatment on educational theory rather than on policy analysis or leadership theory in general. We think educational leadership has features making it distinct from other forms of leadership. In addition, leadership research often aims at developing support for practice. This article is not aiming at creating new action models or recommendations for leadership practice. Rather, it aims at trying to understand the nature of educational leadership as perceived by practitioners by opening up these experiences as social constructions around leadership corresponding with discourse analytical and educational theory interests. We agree with post-structural research that em-
phasizes the importance of context and language and the way language can be interpreted as something that is constitutive for the subject, and the subject’s talk and actions (Juuti, 2001). In comparison to research on strategies and policies, this is something that has not been studied in any great detail within the HE sector. Research about the leadership of higher education institutions (HEIs) has rather been rooted in public administration, strategical leadership and different approaches developed within organizational theory (Kirveskari, 2003). Finally, we argue that educational leadership has not been a point of departure in HEI leadership research (Tigerstedt, 2015).

However, approaching leadership from a non-static viewpoint, where both the external context and the social landscape inside the organization matters, is not new. Karp & Helgø (2009) have studied leadership from a similar angle and indicate that how a leader reacts and acts is partly dependent on what kind of recognition and responses he or she receives from others, partly on the context in general and, also, on the leader’s personal attributes. They put forth that this does not mean that the leader does not have a choice or control. Instead, the leader bases his or her choices on the responses, context and recognition, and matches these to fit his or her own intention (Karp & Helgø, 2009).

To move a step further from the kind of research referred to above, we approach the social dynamics involved in leadership from a discursive perspective. In this view, social influence represents a dialogic approach to leadership. Social structures, interaction, and interactional positionings have been studied by, for example, McKenna (2010) according to whom a dialogical approach is crucial for understanding managers’/leaders’ social and organizational positioning. Yet, the pedagogical nature of this leadership influence is often less developed.

Empirical research viewing leadership as discourse aims at revealing existing interpretations of leadership. This research intends to describe the plurality of perspectives without holding any one above the other (Juuti, 2001). A postmodern approach is not normative or prescriptive – there is no one right way. Also more generally, the importance of shifting perspectives of one’s leadership is underlined (Bolman & Deal 2008). The approach is reminiscent of empirical phenomenological psychology in that it is assumed that individuals experience the world differently and that all organizations are thought to consist of people acting from their own understandings of what is going on (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The leadership in focus is therefore also social and non-static. As a result, the rector’s role is formed in social interaction by being framed and affected by it, but also contributing to the construction of social reality. Such a view is supported by research on professional development demonstrating a variation in how professionals at different stages of their career understand their jobs. Increasing research questioning such stage theories (Dall’Alba & Sandberg, 2006) provides support for a discursive approach to leadership research. Also, in the past two
decades, research on professional learning communities supports these assumptions. According to Stoll & Louis (2007), such communities have certain characteristics in common: sharing values and vision, collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration, group and collective learning as well as individual learning.

Although leadership research in HE has indeed applied a discourse analytical perspective, the focus has not been on the pedagogical or educational qualities or dimensions of leadership. We therefore think that educational leadership research in HE rarely theorizes the nature of leadership activity itself as an educational activity and how it influences co-workers. Instead, the main topic for the discursive approaches so far seem to have been strategies and policies (Simola 1998, Saarinen 2008, Välima & Hoffman 2008). However, Saarinen’s work on policy discourse is still relevant from an educational perspective since it highlights the importance of contrasting discursive policy work with an analysis of situations where policymakers engage with these discourses (Saarinen, 2008). Consequently, it is assumed that as leadership is contextual, educational leadership investigates how actors relate to policy discourses. Here the mediating role of the rector (principal) is visible. As we find discursive approaches to HE policy and HE policy implementations to be somewhat rare, the present approach to educational leadership may support that research as well.

This study adds to the strategy and policy oriented research on discourse by addressing educational leadership in HE. Consequently, educational leadership as such is seen as having distinctive attributes consonant to a discursive understanding. In the following, the field of educational leadership is first characterized and then a non-affirmative theory on educational leadership coherent with a discursive approach is presented as an alternative.

**Educational and pedagogical leadership in HEIs**

Leaders of HEIs work in relation to multiple functional areas within their institutions. The internal tasks include academic affairs, teacher quality, curriculum quality, admissions, student affairs, facilities, finance, HR, IT, legal issues, and PR. This is accompanied by accountability to multiple stakeholders. In recent years, tasks related to funding has increased. Compared to leaders of educational institutions in general, the HEIs communicate directly with national authorities. Yet, except for a few, most leaders of HEIs lack adequate education for the task.

Sometimes a difference is made between pedagogical and educational leadership. To us, educational leadership refers to the practice of acting as a leader for both educational institutions, like schools and universities, and for other organizations. Leadership is educational to the extent it directly or indirectly aims at supporting human learning at work. Leadership is peda-
gogical to the extent it aims at supporting human growth and learning in and through social interaction.

Educational leadership is mostly used in research investigating leadership in primary and secondary education. We argue that the concept has relevance also within HEI although we here find educational leaders at different levels with different work profiles. Although the HEI rector often has been discussed and described within management research as a strategic leader (Juppo, 2011; Kirveskari, 2003), the HEI rector is educationally responsible in the sense that he or she is leading an educational institution. This includes administration or management of the administration as well as leading the development of the organization. Thus, university leaders are educational leaders partly because of the specific nature of the institution itself. However, that the staff is learning occurs in any workplace and organization and does not make any crucial difference. Yet, staff learning through research is distinctive for universities. To lead a “learning through research” organization is also specific due to its educational task – to teach students. A university leader leads all in the organization – its leaders, teachers and students. Still, they often act via other leaders and their learning, who in turn lead teachers and their learning. The teachers in turn teach studying students. Thus, pedagogical leadership operating via social interaction aiming at the Other’s professional learning is considered a part of educational leadership. Frequent words indicating the presence of a pedagogical leadership on a human interactive level are: engagement, authenticity, ethics, democracy, motivation, honesty, competent, change, development, charisma, explaining and holistic (Ohlson, 2011). In Finland, one has also used the term pedagogical leadership in connection with leaders of educational institutions (Kirveskari, 2003), but the concept has not been used within the HE sector.

Their (1994) includes the wellbeing of and the care for other people as an important component of leadership. Work-satisfaction is an important topic in leading universities as well. Herein lies a pedagogical aspect which is left out in some other leadership theories concerned with competence development and learning – people are not only a resource that must learn and develop to be economically productive.

In a meta-analysis describing leadership research, Shields (2010) distinguishes between transformative, transactional, and transformational leadership. Transformative leadership relates to themes such as social justice, ethics, democratic leadership, responsibility, and successful schools. It holds a potential for deep and meaningful change in educational settings because it considers things that take place outside the organization and how these have an impact on the internal outcomes in an educational institution (Shields, 2010). Transformational leadership, in turn, can be described as proactive and hence strives towards continuous improvement of the organization itself. Components that this leadership type has in common with the transformative leadership approach are the importance of inspiration, individualized consid-
oration, and the fostering of cultural change (Bass, 1990). Transformational leadership has been preferred in educational settings since it is an approach where leadership has an identifiable, even though sometimes indirect, impact on student learning outcomes and on organizational learning (Möller, 2009; Mulford, Silins & Leithwood, 2004; Hallinger, 2003). The transactional leadership is a ‘Management by exception leadership.’ It is retroactive and short-term focused and includes a transaction or agreement, an ad-hoc reward: if you do this you get that. Transactional leaders solve a problem when it is already there – the change is not proactive or continuous (Yukl, 2002).

A non-affirmative approach to discursive leadership

From the above we can conclude that HE leadership research may be expected to acknowledge both external and internal dimensions of leadership. HE leadership appears to be a multidimensional and distributed practice, operating differently on different levels of the system. These levels and types of leadership activities (economic, research, teaching, staff, curriculum) are coordinated in different ways. They are focused on external and internal issues or on combinations of these.

Policies frame both leadership and other practices in higher education. Policies are manifest in policy documents. Previous research shows that these HEI policy documents address social actors differently depending on who have produced these documents and for whom these documents are aimed. Following the view of discourse as ‘policy texts in policy contexts,’ Saarinen (2008) has observed that in transnational documents HE actors are often referred to in an indirect way. Also in national documents discussing transnational topics such as the Bologna process, HE actors are seen as rather passive receivers. Institutions are mentioned, but not the actors themselves: personnel, leaders, and students. In contrast, documents primarily aimed for the national arena address actors in a more direct way, especially if national issues are discussed. In these documents, actors (staff, students, leaders) are considered much more active than in the transnational ones. Given that the policy steering and enactment process is both a top-down as well as a bottom-up one we may assume that this holds especially true for the national policy processes (Saarinen, 2008). University leaders’ leadership thus includes a discursive relation to national authorities.

However, in our mind, what lacks is a conceptually more distinct way of addressing these issues. Therefore, we intend to propose a number of concepts that may be beneficial to this end. We find it rewarding to approach these top-down and bottom-up enactment and construction processes by a non-hierarchical understanding of the relation between societal forms of practice. Such a view, in turn, opens up for a non-affirmative view of leadership practice.
A non-hierarchical foundation of discourse. Within western democracies it is typically assumed that educational activities at different levels of the education system demonstrate certain features one of which is a relative freedom. Such a principle accepts and defends a relative autonomy regarding the agency of professional actors within the system (Wermke & Salokangas, 2015). As perceived here, this position assumes two things: first, a non-hierarchical relation between societal forms of practice like education and politics as well as between education and economy; second, a non-affirmative theory of educational influence (Benner, 1991, Uljens, 2002, 2015, Uljens & Ylimaki, 2015).

The principle of non-hierarchicality means that societal education is dependent on and framed by political decision-making, but that the political system is simultaneously dependent on education, the reason being that educational institutions prepare individuals for future political, cultural, and economic citizenship. However, how educational institutions depend on politics varies. For example, a fundamental difference between schools and HEIs is the lack of a politically agreed curriculum directing the HE. Yet, HEIs are still not totally autonomous of political decisions regarding finances and structures.

The principle of non-hierarchical relations between societal forms of practices means that education is both sub- and super-ordinate in relation to these other practices (Benner, 1991; Uljens, 2002, 2015). This interdependent and non-hierarchical relation between politics, economy, and education is seen as a fundamental feature of western education systems resulting in a continuous dialogue between e.g. politics and education. We call this dialogue emanating from a non-hierarchical, i.e. an unclosed or aporetic relation between societal practices (e.g. education, politics, economy, healthcare), discourse. Assuming the discursive nature of these relations means that they are constitutively open. The openness means that there will be an ongoing negotiation of e.g. meaningfulness, values, knowledge and politics behind and overt in various initiatives. This is why a fundamental feature of educational leadership is discursive in character. Educational leadership is thus considered a discursive, i.e. mediating intersubjective activity between different epistemic practices (research, teaching, learning, theory, administrative routines, cultural practices, architecture, IT) and value dimensions (ethics and politics) (Uljens, 2015). In this mediation, actors position themselves differently (Tigerstedt, in press) depending on their personal preferences and values, professional competencies and responsibilities as well as their position, tradition, and existing norms (Saarukka, 2014). Educational leadership is further conceptualized as a multi-level and multi-professional activity within the HEIs. In addition, the HEIs are seen as historically developed educational institutions which means that discourses are to be interpreted as ways of talking and acting that have developed over time.
Non-affirmative leadership. Typically leadership is considered to be about influencing others (Yukl, 2002). Above, it was claimed that the nature of what is referred to by educational leadership is often left open. This study is based on a theory of educational leadership assuming that education in democratic educational institutions is about influencing others in a non-affirmative way. Non-affirmative influence means summoning others to self-activity. Educational as well as pedagogical leadership is then about calling attention to, questioning or problematizing contemporary practices, values or interests, or, to do the same with ideals or political policies for the future. That is, existing societal and other norms and practices are taken seriously, i.e. recognized, yet questioned for educational purposes in order to create a reflective space for the Other’s growth. Education as summoning the Other to self-activity (Ge. Aufforderung zur Selbsttätigkeit) means that the educator/leader intentionally adopts a position in relation to the given circumstances and aims but in such a way that room is left for the Other to establish or re-establish the relation to oneself, others or the world. This reminds one of Starratt’s (2004) ethical leadership.

The principle of non-affirmative influence is related to the concept of recognition (Honneth, 2003; Fraser & Honneth, 2003). To recognize the Other means to accept the Other’s presence as a demand requiring a response, but also to accept the Other’s freedom or non-determinedness (Ranciere, 2010). In contrast to some other theories of recognition, the present one maintains a distinction between recognition and the educational leadership as summoning to self-activity. The argument would be that education goes beyond pure recognition, e.g. having recognized somebody or a situation as something is not yet to take educational leadership action.

The principle of non-affirmativity assumes further that the task of educational practice is to problematize established norms, practices, and knowledge, yet in a non-determined way. Would practices be questioned with instrumental motives and given aims this most likely violates the Other’s possibilities to contribute to a process. In this view, education is about supporting the individual’s development towards professional, political, and cultural autonomy and as such absolutely necessary for a liberal democratic society. Also the labor market operates in a similar fashion requiring active and innovative approaches to the development of processes and products. We think such an organizational ethos cannot be reached by neglecting participants’ contributions in developmental work.

Discursive institutionalism. Contemporary educational leadership research often draws on organizational theory thus disregarding that educational institutions are public institutions. As we discuss how educational leadership operates within HEIs as publicly governed institutions we need to turn to institutional theory. This step must be taken despite the fact that HEIs hold the positions of being independent juridical entities in Finland and the fact that the separation from the state has increased in recent years.
Discursive institutionalism developed by Schmidt (2008) adds to this tradition of thought as it takes its point of departure in normative and cognitive ideas on a philosophical, policy, and program level. These ideas occur as either a coordinative or a communicative discourse, depending on the prevailing political system. In our interpretation a discursive approach to educational leadership in HEIs aims at revealing how processes and dynamics between actors and levels are related to how these substantive ideas (e.g. curricular aims) are reconstructed and how individuals position themselves in relation to these ideas. Consequently, we perceive policy actors on e.g. a national level leading the change processes together with the HEIs (boards and rectors) as a specific type of professional learning communities operating in and creating dynamic environments.

The above definition of educational influence as non-affirmative is coherent with discursive institutionalism – non-affirmative influence acknowledges the open and aporetic character of discourses. Here educational work is viewed as systematic interruption, based on ideas of the practitioners’ self-understanding and carrying out professional tasks. Differently expressed, an interruption is an intervention in the Other’s relation to him- or herself, other persons, and the world (Honneth, 2003). Discourse analytical approaches typically focus on the construction, constitution and occurrence of discourses. In this study we assume that the HEI rector constructs and constitutes such discursive spaces that invite co-workers to reconstruct themselves.

This recognition-based philosophy provides a general frame for understanding how the educational activities work as interventions. Here influence does not mean implementation of ready-made ideas but an invitation to dialogue. In our view, in so doing, educational leadership recognizes the subject as radically free as this makes him or her able to transcend what is given. But the position also acknowledges the necessity of the subject’s own agency as a necessary requirement for transcending a given state. The effects of educational leadership are, obviously, also in the hands of the receivers enacting these intentions. The educational discourse as invitation to self-activity and self-formation creates spaces within and between institutionalized levels.

In this study, educational leadership is seen as:

- a non-affirmative, critical-interpretative and cultural-historical and institutional practice,
- carried out on and across different levels of the educational system as discursive and non-affirmative enactment practices made possible by non-hierarchical relations between societal forms of practices,
- where professional actors, through their roles (tasks), relations, persons, and professional identities,
• based on a recognition of the Other’s potentiality, reality, and possibility, aimed at supporting teachers/principals/students by summoning (inviting, intervening, demanding, supporting, provoking) them to engage in the transcendence of one’s current pedagogical work in a non-affirmative way (Uljen & Ylimaki, 2015)

Methodological discussion

Above we have argued that research on leadership in HEIs needs to connect educational leadership studies and institutional theory with educational theory in order to approach the educational and pedagogical leadership discourse within a HEI context. What follows methodologically from what we have said above? In our minds, a first conclusion is that a discursive approach to HEI leadership is relevant as it corresponds to the non-affirmative and non-hierarchical nature of educational HEI leadership.

Throughout the article discursiveness has been in focus. The article is inspired by perspectives from the traditions of discourse analysis (DA) research both theoretically and empirically. Having said that it is worthwhile pointing out the fact that DA in itself is both a theory and a method (Winter-Jörgensen & Phillips, 2000). General features of DA research are, first, that language is seen as varying as well as leading to a variation of consequences, second, that language is constructed and constituted, third, that multiple true descriptions of one phenomena are commonly possible and, finally, that a wide variation (in the data) is to be expected (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994).

Furthermore, discourse analysis is well motivated if one wants to investigate power and leadership relations (Pietikäinen & Mäntynen, 2009). Here the educational leadership is seen in the light of policy and dialogue with actors on multiple levels as well as in relation to the sub- and superordinate relation to other practices within and outside the HEI. It is, in other words, interesting to see how leadership is both enacted and carried out and to examine the externally framed, constituted, and constructed discourses within HEI leadership. The focus is on the discourse formed by the rector’s speech and talk. For example, how do rectors talk about changes? In this specific study, we explore these patterns using discursive psychology as a level and perspective in conducting discourse analysis. This offers us possibilities to investigate smaller discourses like those occurring in the rector’s talk (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The analysis and examination of HEI leadership discourses (interpretive repertoires and subject positions) are discussed in Tigerstedt (2015).
The empirical data

The empirical data that forms the point of departure for the discussion here consists of 63 inauguration speeches and 8 in-depth interviews with HEI rectors collected between 2008 and 2012. An inauguration speech is the speech held by the rector in the beginning of each academic year. These speeches are considered official documents and are found online. The inauguration speeches are also so-called ‘naturally occurring material’ that already existed when the research project started. It is a typical material for a DA (Pietikäinen & Mäntynen, 2009). Interviews on the other hand are not always considered typical DA data. However, thoroughly transcribed and turned into a text they can be viewed as DA data (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001). Here the empirical findings are discussed in the form of interpretive repertoires and subject positions both being analytical tools commonly used within discursive psychology in order to describe the discourse (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). A subject position is a position in the discourse that the individuals can identify with or choose not to identify with (Söreide, 2007). Interpretive repertoires (i.e. different vocabularies) are systematic sets of terms often used in a similar way. In addition, they are often centered around one or more metaphors (Potter, 1996).

Results

Let us now take a look at the inauguration speeches of the Finnish HEI rectors. When examining the HEI rectors’ inauguration speeches six interpretive repertoires were identified (Tigerstedt, in press):

*The Value Oriented Rector:* The rector who is value-oriented is pointing out values and ideologies which are preferred and is also signalling those not preferred. Sometimes the rector’s own subjective point of view becomes visible here, but many statements also refer to the organization’s value base.

*The Caring Rector:* This is a human relations focused leader and a rector who wants to see that people feel good and feel that they are appreciated.

*The International Rector:* As a leader this rector tries to motivate and activate co-workers and students to be internationally open and to be aware of the aspects mentioned above, and also stresses the importance and awareness of internationalization.

*The Strategic Rector:* This action oriented rector is involved in strategic work, and is interested in driving the development and the implementation of strategies. Connecting core activities to strategy is both crucial and interesting. The strategic rector focuses a great deal on the external environment and the HEI’s positioning.
The Change Driven/driving Rector: This rector experiences a need for continuous change, and also mentions competition and the surrounding society as the driver for this. This leader is outgoing and is very much looking outside of the own organization.

A Facts Oriented (neutral) Rector: This rector tries to act neutral and could also be called the carefully interpretive or translating rector who is trying to talk to the organization and to the world outside at the same time. This rector can get a static and kind of a repetitive role.

As we can see, the rectors did not explicitly experience themselves as pedagogical leaders at an interactive level. However, the descriptions above reveal that their leadership approaches clearly reflect educational leadership, i.e. ideas of how the staff’s learning and development should be best supported. For example, the value oriented rector takes as a point of departure certain core values while the caring rector not only focuses on academic learning and teaching among staff and students but also on wellbeing, presumably as this is a value in itself and because it may turn out as a successful strategy in the long run. The internationally oriented leader again supports learning that takes the international dimension into account.

Educational leadership is here understood as a mediating activity between different interests. Given this, the positions above can be read as different approaches to what this mediation should aim at, from where it should start or how it should be carried out. The positions offer different answers to how the sub- and super-ordinate relations to different societal practices (such as the Ministry level, national level) should be defined visible. The following excerpt from a speech demonstrates how the organization of universities has changed and how the rector navigates in this new landscape:

"You cannot often enough stress the role of the board for the future of the university. It sets the overall aims regarding the HEIs’ actions and the economy, the board draws strategic lines as well as gives the guidelines for what actions can be taken. It approves of the negotiated contract with the Ministry of Education. It also elects and dismisses the rector if necessary. The rector is not a member of the board, but a referendary, who … sits on a great deal of designation power and power to act. Taken all together one can see how the operational and individual leadership is enhanced at all levels of management. The change to what we have had is enormous." (20)

We can see how the balance between the different leadership levels, both internal and external, are understood and interpreted by the rector. This, at the time of the speech, was a natural topic to discuss since the new university act had changed the role of the rector quite extensively. Otherwise this might not be something the rector discusses during an inauguration speech. By doing so the rector makes the process of enactment and mediation visible. The excerpt above shows the discursive nature of the leadership process.
External developments reconstruct the rectors’ tasks and degrees of freedom, while the rectors themselves also contribute to the constructing and constituting of the rector’s leadership.

We can also connect the content of the excerpt with the idea of leadership as a non-affirmative summoning to self-activity. The different leadership positions do not present explicit and exact aims concerning what these institutions should aim at or what the researchers and teachers should teach or learn. Yet, the positions, to varying degrees, point at a certain direction; they address certain topics that activities within these educational institutions should pay attention to. In doing so, the rectors clearly contribute to constructing a space within the organization. This space can be seen as an invocation to the members and something to which they, in turn, may respond. The rectors’ positions vary to the extent they affirm external interests. The internationally oriented rector, for example, affirms that success on the international arena is important. Other positions are less affirmative, e.g. the facts oriented rector.

In the excerpt, the internal (within the institution) summoning to self-activity cannot be seen directly. In the following extract, on the other hand, we have a different case where this is evident. Here, in turn, the non-affirmative influence on others, giving the space to reflect, is seen. This extract makes visible and confirms the assumption made earlier in the article about the very nature of leadership in HEIs: the HEI rector constructs and constitutes such discursive spaces that invite co-workers to reconstruct themselves. This is an invitation to dialogue and shows that the leader considers the co-workers as free to act:

“We have this time decided to have an online strategy discussion. Everyone who wants to can familiarize themselves with the online draft material and comment on it.” (26)

In the inauguration speeches it is more common for the rector to take on a neutral or an interpretive tone (Facts oriented rector – interpretive repertoire and subject position). In this, one can sense the internal non-affirmativity, i.e. the dialogical way to approach each other in a way that enables individual co-workers to make their own decisions and interpretations. A problematizing but neutral orientation opens up possibilities for the audience, the co-workers, to draw their own conclusions. A dialogical space is created and the relations are constitutively open. There is most likely an ongoing negotiation of e.g. meaningfulness, values, knowledge and politics.

But, as we observed above, we can find both open and closed positions, i.e. a variation of the degree to which a position is affirmative or non-affirmative. For example, within the interpretive repertoire called the strategic rector, the position seems to be more closed and the rector seems to be more direction giving or convincing leaving less up to the receiver, but on
the other hand here the non-hierarchical relation to the Ministry can be seen in the rector’s statements:

"The competition on the international education market requires that the internal management mechanisms allowing the HEI within the frames of the strategy, to have a strong role in the decision making when it comes to economic and academic questions." (10)

The rector uses several discourses to explain and interpret strategies and policy and in so doing is at the same time flexible using this space him- or herself. The rector’s talk in the speeches is constantly shifting between the identified interpretive repertoires (can also be understood as clustered subject positions).

In the interviews with the rectors’ the talk about strategy gave, in fact, a closer insight into the very nature of the leadership and the balancing within the available space. The mediating role is if possible more visible. This becomes evident especially in the interpretive dialogue where the rector explains the new role to the interviewer (researcher). The rector sees this role as containing certain free spaces: what has to be done is clear but how this can be done is very much formed by the rector in the talk about strategy, for example when highlighting certain points in the speech while leaving other points out or by giving them a minor visibility/role.

The multi-level and multi-professional nature of HEI leadership is visible when looking at the various positions found in the interviews. Different positions occur during the same speech in a flexible manner depending on the themes discussed as well as the receiver (aimed at audience.) Tigerstedt (in press) discusses this particular issue in relation to discourses formed in interviews with the HEI rectors. The rectors seem to be able to easily recognize the multi-level and multi-professional nature of practice of which their leadership occurs as a part. The discursive nature seems to have gained even more importance if one looks at the way the rectors describe their current roles and tasks. Within HEI in Finland, like elsewhere, both complexity and freedom have increased, but at the same time the dependency on the state is remaining strong. This fact is an example of how the non-hierarchical relation operates. It reveals a two-fold relation showing a double dependency:

"The separation from the State … gave autonomy to the universities, but the independence is never unidirectional but brings also some more responsibility and some obligations…” (26)
Conclusions

Considering that educational leadership in this article is seen as a mediating intersubjective activity between different practices one can see that dimensions of this is unfolding in the material/data discussed here. A dialogue is seen as important and the interpretive and communicative rector is visible in the discourse. The rector seems to experience that there is a great freedom of choice when it comes to acting: there is space left for the Other (e.g. co-worker) to re-establish him or herself in relation to others and the world. In the interviews with the HEI rectors, this became evident as one rector mentions that what has to be done is often clear, but the way or how it has to be done is left up to them, the rectors. Here the space, freedom to act and lead in a dialogical way is visible. There seems to be an open space that will form the discourse in the social context. The discursive nature of the leadership is present.

To influence others in a non-affirmative way is about providing the Other with a reflective space or to create this space for the Other in the process of recognition. Not all positions were equally non-affirmative. According to our interpretation, the speeches reflect a constant recognizing of the co-workers as Others when different discourses or positions are used in the process. However, the openness or closedness in the positioning and affirmation varies and this holds true for the themes as well, i.e. talking to students about certain topics become relevant and then again when talking to co-workers other discourses take over. The rector is at the same time also deciding how much room is left for the Other as he or she talks.

Below we come back to the initially discussed types of leadership (Shields, 2010) and look at these in the light of discursive educational leadership the way we have been discussing this in the article. The figure is a modification of Shields’s figure (2010, 563) and here we have added the discursive educational/pedagogical leadership as a fourth type of leadership that takes into account the very discursive nature of HEI leadership. The discursive educational leadership in HEIs can be described as a leadership that is non-hierarchical in terms of sub-and super ordination towards different levels and also non-affirmative in its nature in the way the summoning to self-activity is shown. The freedom to act is important and the leader uses this effectively in his or her leadership. He or she balances and constructs his or her role over and over again in the social context influenced by the dialogical nature and relations surrounding him or her within and outside of HE.
Table 1. Four leadership types including discursive educational/pedagogical leadership developed and modified, but based on Shields (2010, 563).

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<th>Transactional Leadership</th>
<th>Transformational Leadership</th>
<th>Transformative Leadership</th>
<th>Discursive Educational/ Pedagogical Leadership</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Starting point</strong></td>
<td>A desired agreement or item</td>
<td>Need for organization to run smoothly and efficiently</td>
<td>Realities outside the organization that impinge on the success of individuals, groups and organization as a whole</td>
<td>An interpretation of external demands in relation to internal prerequisites and ambitions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Foundation</strong></td>
<td>An exchange</td>
<td>Meets the needs of complex and diverse systems</td>
<td>Critique and promise</td>
<td>Non-hierarchical discursive practices and non-affirmative relations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Emphasis</strong></td>
<td>Means</td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Change in social conditions, wider, perspective</td>
<td>Development and learning through enactment and initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power</strong></td>
<td>Mostly ignored</td>
<td>Inspirational</td>
<td>A tool for oppression and action</td>
<td>Relational, cannot be eliminated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key values</strong></td>
<td>Responsibility, commitment</td>
<td>Justice, honesty</td>
<td>Democracy, equity, justice</td>
<td>Caring, critique, commitment, democracy, diversity, holistic viewpoints, non-affirmative relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
<td>Agreement, mutual advancement</td>
<td>Organizational change, effectiveness</td>
<td>Individual organizational and societal change</td>
<td>Responsible development of organization and the individual in the society, mediation, matching of goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader</strong></td>
<td>Efficient operations through transactions</td>
<td>Looks for motive, common purpose, organizational goals</td>
<td>Lives with tension, activism &amp; challenge, moral courage</td>
<td>Policy aware, shared purpose, dialogical leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Related theories</strong></td>
<td>Bureaucratic leadership, Scientific Management</td>
<td>School effectiveness, improvement, instructional leadership, change leadership</td>
<td>Critical theories, leadership for social justice</td>
<td>Institutionalism, curriculum/ educational theory, pedagogical, ethical and authentic leadership, sustainable leadership, DA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our intention in this article has been to investigate to what extent concepts within discursive educational leadership (e.g. Uljens & Ylimaki, 2015) may be utilized in order to elaborate how HEI rectors construct and constitute spaces that invite co-workers to reconstruct themselves. We have seen that oftentimes these invitations (summoning to self-activity) operate indirectly rather than directly as they do in social interaction typical for e.g. teaching situations. The study has also shown that there is a variation with respect to the degree of affirmativity. As the rectors as individuals may represent several of the positions described above, one and the same rector can sometimes act in affirmative ways in some situations and in non-affirmative ways in other.

Although many questions remain open and require further development, our impression is that this empirical study has offered support for that discursive educational leadership can be used as a conceptual frame of reference in order to understand the very nature of HEI leadership. The idea that the educational discourse can be viewed as an invitation to self-activity and self-formation that create spaces within and between institutionalized levels may open up for research into HEI leadership in new ways.

References


