This article presents a general theoretical framework for curriculum studies, Didaktik and educational leadership that builds upon strengths and limitations of these traditions, respectively, in Europe and the United States. Methodologically, a meta-theoretical level is used with two guiding core questions: (1) the relation between education and society and (2) the nature of educational influence on the interactive level. On the first question, a nonhierarchical position is defended as it offers a foundation for discursive institutionalism valuable for understanding school work. The second question is handled by three classic education concepts—recognition, summoning to self-activity and Bildsamkeit, as these support a non-affirmative view of educational influence for democratic education. We conclude that this theoretical framework allows us to more coherently conceptualise curriculum work, educational leadership and teaching.

Keywords: curriculum; didactics; educational leadership; discursive institutionalism

Recent neoliberal educational and external evaluation policies have intensified a focus on school leadership, learning results and national curriculum standards. An increased focus on educational leadership is especially obvious in Europe, while leadership has been prominent in the United States for decades. The increased focus on leadership is combined with a renewed relation between policy as curriculum making, leadership as enacted practice and evaluation as a steering vehicle, all of which are occurring amidst increasing global interdependencies among all societal sectors as well as increasing multiculturalism, shifts in technology, energy and economic production. Such conditions also point explicitly towards new dilemmas and tensions among educational unity goals, demographic changes and pressures for multicultural education.

In a broad sense, then, the challenge for changing nation states involves organisational relations among education, politics, economy and culture in order to (re)establish a sense of collective belonging and coherence to a unified whole with spaces that allow for recognition of individual difference and freedom (autonomy). Further, such societal and ideological changes, including the tension between the European social–democratic welfare state model (old public administration) and a neoliberal competition-based model (new public management) and tensions between unity and plurality, have consequences for professional activity, identity and development. This movement and related discourses are truly international, but they take different forms and stages in various countries (Mason & Helfenbein, 2012; Pinar, 2011).

In particular, these challenges have turned our attention towards understanding educational leadership as a multilevel project with power redefined and distributed anew between levels and professional groups, for example, central administration and local schools, between state-level administration and private (family) interests, between transnational organisations such as the European Union (EU), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and nation states, but also within each level. These developments make it crucial to understand the interplay among policies, societal trends and aims, methods, social interactions of leadership–teaching–studying–learning within and between levels; however, curriculum, Didaktik, leadership scholars and political scientists/policy scholars have yet to make these connections explicit.

The purpose of this article is to present a general theoretical framework for curriculum studies, Didaktik and educational leadership that builds upon strengths and limitations of educational leadership studies, curriculum theory and Didaktik in Europe and the United States.
as well as discursive institutionalism, a new analytic framework and research tradition from political science. This initiative connects to and expands beyond the transatlantic dialogue on Didaktik and curriculum theory started in the beginning of 1990s (Hopmann, 2015; Hopmann & Riquarts, 1995a; Hopmann, Riquarts & Westbury, 2000). Our point of departure is that any successful accomplishment of educational practice, be it or teaching or educational leadership on different levels and of different kinds, is partly guided by prevailing conceptual framework and theories, dominating policies, cultural and historical traditions. However, if the undertakings are informed by theoretical positions that conceptually highlight only disparate if important activities and processes of the educational system, and even in conflicting ways, their guiding power may be limited. Though we recognise the value of debates within and between fields and disciplines, we argue that a more general and theoretically solid educational framework for curriculum work and leadership will inform new research studies and fields, as well as create a coherent language for policymakers, preparation programs, school development programs and practitioners. Consonant with this purpose, this article is organised into four main sections. First, we analyse curriculum theory/Didaktik and educational leadership studies, including a discussion of strengths and limitations. Second, we present our general framework that considers core concepts and literature on non-hierarchical and non-affirmative relations from general education theory as well as, third, discursive institutionalism that address the shortcomings from curriculum theory/Didaktik and leadership studies. Fourth, our conclusions examine the potential for our framework to conceptualise educational leadership and teaching professions in a coherent way, not following different theoretical logics.

An analysis of educational leadership studies and curriculum theory/Didaktik
This section analyses literature from two distinct fields, educational leadership and curriculum theory/Didaktik. Specifically, we examine strengths and weaknesses and then identify a shortcoming common to literature in both fields, a blind spot that, in our view, points towards the need for a new general framework that merges and extends educational leadership and curriculum theory/Didaktik. As it is not possible or meaningful within this frame to describe all varieties, we aim to identify core issues and distinctions.

Curriculum theory/Didaktik: strengths and limitations
As the aim is to contribute a theoretical framework framing research on European Didaktik and the Anglo-American curriculum studies and how these may be related to educational leadership, we are engaged in comparative research on Didaktik and curriculum studies. Historically, much research in both curriculum and Didaktik has focused either on philosophical, ethical, political, cultural and psychological foundations of substantial aspects (aims, contents and methods) of teaching, or on the curriculum as processes, that is, how curricula are constructed (initiated), communicated (implemented) and practiced (institutionalised) (Hopmann, 2003; Uljens, 1998). This requires a short reconstruction of commonalities and differences between the traditions.

Although representing different approaches, curriculum studies and Didaktik have over time been mutually influential between United States and Europe (Gundem, 1995; Kansanen, 1995). Dolch (1965) reminds of that the word curriculum has occurred both in English and German but that while the notion survived in English, it was first replaced in the German tradition by Lehrplan (instructional/teaching plan) by the end of 18th century. The curriculum term made its way back to Europe in the end of 1960s by Saul Robinsohn who, in turn, was influenced by Dewey’s pragmatism (Robinsonsohn, 1972). However, Dolch (1965, p. 359) observes that the distinction between a subject-centred and a child-centred curriculum in United States corresponds to a movement from a Lehrplan to a Bildungsplan in Germany at the end of the 19th century, both acknowledging, on the one hand, structuring the contents and subject matter and, on the other, organisation of teaching according to the learner’s varying needs. In the United States, the child-centred, learning psychological approach to curriculum, originally based on an idea of content neutral, psychological principles (Thordike), grew strong early on.

A long-standing topic occurring in both curriculum studies and Didaktik is how the macro and micro levels connect (Goodlad, 1966; Klafki, 1995). The question has often been answered by describing how different levels decide on, act around and evaluate the selection of aims, content and method, that is, curriculum work on a societal, institutional, interactional and personal level (Gundem, 2010; Reid, 1994). Often, but not always, evaluation at different levels is included as an organic part of Didaktik (Klafki, 1994; Uljens, 1998).

While the curriculum as a public policy document and Lehrplan (since the 17th century in Europe) are seen as vehicles for governing the school as a state-driven public institution (Dolch, 1965; Sivesind, 2008; Tenorth, 1988) and providing schools with the general aims of education and subject matter, such an understanding of a state or federal core curriculum is more recent in the United States. In the United States, with a tradition of more state-independent schools, the curriculum has instead more often been considered a tool for local school leadership and organisation of teaching (Hopmann & Riquarts, 1995a; McKernan, 2008; Robinsonsohn, 1972; Ylimaki, 2011). However, Didaktik covers not only research on curriculum as
the national or state-based policy document but also research on the practice of pedagogical or curriculum work within schools (Gundem & Hopmann, 1998; Klafki, 1995). As a result, Didaktik, since Comenius’s Didactica Magna (Comenius, 1907/1633), has functioned as education theory and a tool for lesson preparation, thereby receiving a similar role in teacher education as curriculum work did in the United States (Hopmann & Riquarts, 1995b; Jank & Meyer, 2002).

Throughout history, instruction in cognitive contents (qualification) has, in principle, been considered subordinated to and as a vehicle for cultivation of more general capacities (will, moral reasoning, identity or character). That is, the selection and treatment of contents should serve educative purposes beyond learning the subject matter itself (e.g., Herbart’s ‘educative teaching’, C.H. Judd’s view of transfer; Benner, 1993; Somr & Hrušková, 2014). Here, the teacher’s task is to extraplate the educative power or qualities (Bildungsgehalt) of the selected contents (Bildungsinhalte). In the era of international evaluations like PISA, a pragmatic qualification centred view of these general competencies has strengthened. Yet, curriculum theory rarely theorises the nature of educational activity itself and how it influences students studying or learning.

Looking back at the recent history of European Didaktik and US curriculum studies, we find an empirical orientation (e.g. Bellack, Kliebard, Hyman, & Smith, 1966) to understanding the pedagogical (curriculum) process (e.g. the Nordic DPA project, didactic process analysis conducted by Dahlloff, 1967; Koskenniemi, 1971), critiques of content neutral learning theory and a renewal of content-based approaches (e.g. Marton, 1981; Shulman, 1986). In his critique of cognitivist learning theory and basing teaching on content neutral principles of learning, for instance, Marton’s (1981) phenomenography turned the search light towards the variation in students’ experiences of the curricular content. In the United States, Shulman (1986) promoted pedagogical content knowledge that enables the teacher ‘to transform the content knowledge he or she possesses into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented by students’ (Shulman, 1987, p. 15).

In the 1980s, learning psychology was also criticised for disregarding the cultural and institutional context of learning which led to a variety of socio-cultural, situated and distributed approaches to learning (e.g. Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Cole & Engeström, 1993; Hutchins & Klausen, 1990; Lave, 1988; Rogoff, 1990; Säljö, 1994). These studies were mostly carried out in non-institutional learning, thus paying little attention to how organised teaching intervened in the learning (Bildung) process. An approach more relevant for Didaktik and institutional education was developed by Engeström (1987), that is, the Scandinavian school of Vygotskian cultural-historical learning and activity theory. Further, this approach combined a content-centred view of learning and teaching by locating this process in a larger social, cultural, historical and institutional activity system.

Although these empirical approaches influenced North European Didaktik and research on curriculum work and teaching in many ways, they typically did not raise questions of educational aims, ethics or leadership. Educational leadership as educational policy making was, however, more evident in curriculum research by Dahlloff (1967) and Lundgren (1972). This research developed later into studying curriculum codes inspired by Basil Bernstein. In contrast, Englund (2006) developed Didaktik as curriculum theory drawing on reconceptualism but moving in a neopragmatist direction by focusing on curriculum work as deliberative practice and communication. This deliberational and sociopolitical take on curriculum dialogues in schools acknowledged how meaning was negotiated and constructed around subject matter in institutional settings preparing the learner for a self-determined participatory and deliberative democratic citizenship (Englund, Forsberg, & Sundberg, 2012). Other post-modern and post-structural developments (e.g. Säfström & Östman, 1999) were influenced by post- and late modern theory (Foucault, 1997; Rorty, 1989) according to which social reality and its power relations are partly constituted by discourses, which were to be de- and reconstructed.

It should be observed that the curriculum in the European Bildung tradition has traditionally not formalised either the substantive contents in terms of a cultural canon or a set of instructional methods. Rather the teacher’s task was to select methods and contents that made educationally sense for the learner given the context and experiences. Pinar (2004, 2011) is one of the few recent North American curriculum theorists to incorporate German and Nordic Bildung traditions and core concepts in theorising curriculum, extending the curriculum meeting Didaktik dialogue in the 1990s, including US scholars Ian Westbury, Walter Doyle, and Lee Shulman.

In a clear departure from 20th century curriculum theorists (e.g. Bobbitt, Schwab, Westbury), Pinar (1978) aimed at a reconceptualisation of dominant North American views of curriculum work in schooling by moving, first, beyond a traditionalist approach in which curriculum research was about ‘service to practitioners’ and school improvement followed a technological rationality and, second, beyond a conceptual-empiricist approach, viewing curricular content in relation to scientific disciplines for which curriculum research more resembled social science than viewing education as a discipline of its own. According to Pinar (2009), in Bildung, the cultivation of personal uniqueness does not occur in isolation but only in communication with others in complicated conversation, communication and processes of recognition. Pinar (2009, p. 43) draws on Bildung’s appreciation of study, inwardness, judgment and morality in understanding curriculum.
as complicated conversation that includes dialogue and recognition as well as incommunicability and misrecognition. However, from a leadership perspective, he does not explicitly consider the institutional dimensions of schooling and other dimensions of education.

Other curriculum scholars have taken a critical, social transformation position on the role of education in radical social change (e.g. Freire, 1993; Giroux, 1980), with increasing attention to cultural plurality and cultural politics. Critical curriculum theorists differ, however, in terms of epistemological perspectives and related emancipation processes, from development of critical consciousness (e.g. Freire, 1993; Giroux, 1980) to the necessity of conflict to overcome structural inequities built and reproduced within institutionalised schooling through, for example, the hidden curriculum (Apple, 2004; McLaren, 2000). From a subjectivist view of reality, some social transformation theorists consider how the individual creates the world in which the individual lives, emphasizing the importance of curriculum work to developing a critical consciousness to transcend the limitations of existing social arrangements (e.g. Gramsci, 1996). From a radical structuralist perspective, Apple (2004) argues that curriculum must see as its task today the identification of moral, political and ethical conflicts connected to social inequities, including class structures, gender, race/ethnicity and intersections thereof. In the United States, many multicultural education scholars (e.g. Banks & Banks, 2009; Gay, 2002; Sleeter & Grant, 2007) extend the critically oriented conceptual paradigms from recent curriculum theory. More specifically, these multicultural education theorists contextualise their arguments in broader educational movements, focusing educational content, pedagogical methods and planning on culturally pluralistic contributions to humankind, cultural identities (defined by race/ethnicity and language as well as national citizenship), social consciousness and civic responsibility (Gay, 2002; Gundara, 2000; Portera, 1998). In the German Didaktik, Klaöki (1994, 1995) would be the most well-known European researcher representing a critical-constructivist approach. As in critical curriculum and pedagogy in North American literature (e.g. Apple, 2005; Freire, 1993), this critical dimension is value laden in the sense that his critical-constructive Didaktik accepts self-determination, co-determination and solidarity as aims for education. Klaöki’s (1995) critical-conceptualist approach to education considers objective, institutional dimensions of schooling as well the possibility of critical consciousness for eliminating barriers and changing society. From a similar critical perspective, some European curriculum scholars have also explicitly examined multicultural and intercultural education, most recently arising from the needs of increasing immigration. Across European multicultural education literature, scholars focus on the idea of nation and citizen as well as language diversity (e.g. Gundara, 2000; Portera, 1998). In the wake of population shifts and more open immigration policies in many countries, the ideas of nation and citizen have to be revisited, in order to clarify not only rights but also duties, and to develop social democratic norms for all citizens of a country (Schnapper, 1994). At the same time, an ongoing harmonisation may be identified. While the Anglo-American cultures strengthen school governance by introducing core curricula, European countries have moved from an input-centred curriculum policy to an outcome-oriented evaluation policy transforming contents to measurable learning.

As we see it, curriculum scholars propose strong intellectual arguments and analytical tools, but their views typically still offer a normative view, promoting a particular set of values and ideals (Uljens, 1998; Ylimaki, Fetman, & Matyjasik, 2014). Moreover, in large part, these strong intellectual arguments and debates have not reached educational leadership discourses, research traditions and paradigms. That is, many curriculum debates establish the need and open the door for leadership and institutional/organisational analyses, but leadership has not been an area of focus in this literature. Most often, across this recent curriculum literature, leadership is only implicit in topics, such as ‘planning for new international subjects and curriculum homogenisation’ (Gough, 2001), ‘accountability-based authority’ (Palamidessi & Feldman, 2003) and ‘requirements to mediate tensions between intellectual curriculum work and instrumental curriculum policies’ (Greene, 2001).

Educational leadership studies: strengths and limitations

The educational leadership field has centred attention on social interactions in schools with literature often structured in two interrelated approaches: (1) a paradigmatic categorisation of modern theories and studies and (2) the division between empirically developed approaches. Empirical leadership research has been predominantly carried out in a North-American context with its longer history of a stronger accountability orientation and decentralised governance systems, while educational leadership is far less prominent within European research.

Early literature theorised administrative and worker interactions within organisational systems: (1) the rational systems theories and related scientific management principles of efficiency and effectiveness (e.g. Fayol, 1949; Taylor, 1947); (2) the human relations or natural systems theories (McGregor, 1960) and (3) the open systems theories (e.g. Callahan, 1962; Perrow, 1970) merging both. Research studies grounded in these organisational theories comprise what Halpin called the New Theory Movement, primarily focusing on concrete relationships among administrative functions, behaviour and organisational effectiveness, essentially eliminating liberal arts, law,
understands education as socialisation-oriented, being consistent with a pre-modern mode of thought that Leithwood, 1994, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003) have networks influence school (micro organisational) changes. More recently, research has also recently started to move towards a multilevel approach, inspired by institutional theories that explain how societal and policy structures create homogenisation in related organisations through isomorphism (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 2006).

Recent leadership literature has been largely empirical in nature with many studies still grounded in organisational theories. For instance, in an international leadership study (ISSPP), researchers examined how the principal/lead teacher contributes to school success as defined by student outcomes. Similarly, Leithwood and Seashore-Louis (2011) examined transformational leadership and its effects, defining leadership as a network of influence and control. The intention is to understand the network of influence as well as outcomes on student learning in schools. Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001) come closer to considering the role of societal aims on distributed leadership practices, emphasising the importance of principals’ understandings about the state of society, but their primary focus is still on how leader–follower networks influence school (micro organisational) changes.

Other scholars (e.g. Hallinger, 2005; Jackson, 2000; Leithwood, 1994, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003) have examined shared instructional leadership approaches, defining leadership in relation to transformational approaches Regardless of whether leadership is conceptualised as an individual or collective construct, these studies are consistent with a pre-modern mode of thought that understands education as socialisation-oriented, being located within the existing society or culture.

Studies conducted from an interpretivist paradigm also tend to reflect normativity and an understanding of education as socialisation; however, in contrast to functionalist theories and studies reviewed above, these scholars explain that organisations are socially constructed and exist only in the subjective perceptions of people (Greenfield, 1987). In other words, at a micro-level of school studies, an interpretivist approach to organisations focuses on social life, interactions and meaning of these interactions as perceived by individuals, rather than on so-called objective reality. Empirical studies grounded in the micro-subjective paradigm focused more explicitly on leadership contributions to curriculum work with curriculum defined in varying ways, including instructional work in classrooms (e.g. Fullan, 2007; Hallinger, 2005; Murphy & Hallinger, 1988), how curriculum workers perceive the ways in which political and social intentions are translated into content (e.g. Norberg & Johansson, 2010; Ylimaki, 2012; Young, Lambert, Robert, & Robert, 2014).

Educational administration scholars with a critical theory background draw support from Marx, Freire and Habermas as well as more specific theorists devoted to explaining the occurrence and effects of various ‘isms on leaders’ work and the leaders themselves (e.g. feminist theories in women’s leadership studies from Brunner, 1998; Grogan, 1996; Lumby, 2008; racism from Gooden, 2012; Tillman, 2009). Across this literature, leaders and primary participants focused on curriculum and instruction as a vehicle to improve the lives of all children. Thus, a growing number of educational leadership scholars have studied transformative leadership with more revolutionary practices now aimed at radical social change through the creation of inclusive practices in schools (e.g. Foster, 1986; Scheurich, 1998; Theoharis, 2007), taking a clear position that leaders are an important countergenerative force in developing individuals towards a predetermined vision of an ideal future society. Here, scholars who take a ‘critical’ view of schooling address social transformation, and explicitly link schooling to its historical, political, economic and social context (Foster, 1986).

Across all of this literature, we also examined the extent to which educational leadership studies explicitly or implicitly include a theory of education. In our view, theories of education address school–society relationships, including the aims and character of teaching–studying–learning process. Regardless of underlying paradigm or conception of curriculum/instruction, we argue that leadership studies do not really define education or articulate an underlying educational theory. Paradigm notwithstanding, most often, educational leadership studies use terms like instructional, pedagogic, transformational, distributed or transformative leadership to describe various empirical relationships among leadership, teaching and learning (e.g. Hallinger & Heck, 2010) as well as institutionalised barriers to these within educational organisations (e.g. Grogan, 2004; Dillard, 2000; Shields, 2010).

Much recent educational leadership research is, thus, trapped in either an empiricist or descriptive approach or in a prescriptive and normative approach. A classic dilemma with an empiricist approach is that from an empirical description of how leadership or teaching practices operate (function, work) in some given context, conclusions concerning how one should teach or lead in the future cannot necessarily be drawn. Empirically, the intention to look at the relation between leadership and curriculum/instruction is there but is not necessarily related to or framed by any coherent educational theory.
that explicitly considers relationships among leadership interactions within the micro (school) institution and broader landscape. Although we appreciate that leadership studies, by adopting institutional theory instead of organisational theory, understand schools as politically directed institutions, we also argue that leadership studies do not go far enough to consider education theory or, curriculum work within schools as societal institutions, communication and cooperation across institutional levels, or broader questions of societal aims, content and methods.

A common blind spot for both curriculum theory/Didaktik and leadership

A blind spot for both curriculum studies/Didaktik is still a limited attention paid to leadership forms or structures and interactions (Gundem, 2010), an increasing interest in curriculum administration and in the development of curriculum guidelines, as well in evaluation of curriculum reforms on a state level. Further, educational leadership studies are typically blind for the interplay between, on the one hand aims, contents and methods and social interactions within schools (e.g. teaching-studying-learning-leadership) as well as an historical perspective. Moreover, we observe the relation between curriculum theory/Didaktik and sociology, all of which discuss values, identity, culture, social justice and learning but are unable or perhaps even disinterested in relating to each other in a systematic way, remaining isolated although teachers’ and administrators’ work includes all. The practitioner is expected to combine disparate theories and perspectives or rely on ‘experts’ – often normative/instrumental recommendations – that research itself is not able to unify or correct. At the same time, the neoliberal shift in the logics of administration from the state as a provider of services to a buyer of services has made it visible how strongly administrative initiatives, led by a new accountability ideology, influences professional action on all levels. Thus, we argue that curriculum theory/Didaktik and educational leadership studies would benefit from a closer dialogue; curriculum theory/Didaktik extends educational leadership studies’ focus on interactional and institutional perspectives with an explicit consideration of how societal interests transform into educational content. Perspectives developed within leadership studies, that is, how professional groups (teachers, school leaders and superintendents) cooperate in order to work with school development together is an overlooked issue within curriculum studies and Didaktik research. However, we argue that a simple merging of curriculum theory/Didaktik and educational leadership studies is not possible. To address the interplay between schools and society, particularly in overcoming the normativity problem, leadership as a multilevel project in schools as societal institutions, or the paradoxical relationships inherent in notions of leadership influence requires something else.

Towards a general theoretical framework for curriculum work and discursive educational leadership

In constructing our general framework for curriculum work–leadership, we asked two questions as core topics. Answers to these questions are derived from modern education theory and philosophy, educational leadership studies, curriculum theory/Didaktik and discursive institutionalism. Methodologically, in order to bring together and merge object–theoretical discourses on Didaktik, curriculum theory and leadership in (and of) schools as historically developed societal institutions, we see it necessary to move the analysis onto a meta-theoretical level. Therefore, the point of departure is taken in core questions and concepts originally developed within classical or modern continental education theory and philosophy. These concepts form a common ground both for European and American research on curriculum, Didaktik and leadership. By a systematic focus on foundational questions, we point out how a uniting discourse may be grounded and merge the previously mentioned valuable but disparate approaches and research initiatives.

Two questions as core topics

1. How does an educational leadership theory explain the relation between individuals in terms of pedagogical influence? That is, if leadership is to influence somebody else, then what kind of influence are we addressing?

2. How do we define the relation between education and society, that is, the relation between institutional education and other societal forms of practice (e.g. politics, economics and culture)? How are the dynamics between, for example, education and politics explained?

Educational leadership and influence

The first question concerns: How does a theory of educational leadership, curriculum or teaching explain the relation between individuals in terms of pedagogical influence? What kind of influence are we addressing?

Human influence has been considered as a core question in all theory of human action and interaction; however, answers to these questions have typically been paradoxical in nature. For example, in Plato’s philosophy what makes teaching meaningful for learning is not that external information is communicated to the learner by but rather that the learner reaches insight that he or she already possesses. To learn is, thus, paradoxically, to reach something one already possesses. Also for Kant (1900) education was paradoxical: How may education, in the sense of external influence (coercion), lead to the

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internal autonomy of thought and action? Differently expressed, modern education theory typically views education as invitation or provocation to self-reflection and autonomy. However, in order for the individual to reach autonomy in self-reflection abilities, he or she must, according to this line of reasoning, already be perceived as autonomous, free and self-reflecting (Schaffar & Uljens, 2015). In other words, in order for education to be possible, there must exist a free subject whose reflection is provoked, but simultaneously it is thought that the individual becomes a free subject through the process triggered by a provocation. In order for education to be possible the individual must be free and self-active, and simultaneously, in order for the individual to become free and self-active, education seems to be necessary.

Using this argument for developing an understanding of educational leadership as it functions in educational and societal institutions, it is assumed that the individual can reach cultural, productive freedom (the ability to act), only by being recognised and treated as if they are already free (or reflective, capable, trustworthy). Educational leadership is, therefore, understood as a recognising invitation, intervention or provocation, a disturbance or expectation concerning the Other’s relation to himself or herself, the world and others. Following Benner’s (1991) theory of education educational leadership would, then, be to recognise somebody as if they are already capable of doing what they are supposed to become capable of – and to act accordingly (Fichte, 1992; Herbart, 1914/1841; Schleiermacher, 1994). To elaborate, we find three concepts particularly relevant: (1) recognition, (2) summoning to self-activity and (3) Bildsamkeit (Benner, 1991; Uljens, 2002).

Recognition

This Fichtean and Hegelian concept has been interpreted differently by different philosophers, and holds an unquestionable position in contemporary social philosophy (e.g. Honneth, 1992; Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Taylor, 1994). For Fichte (1992), recognition originally referred to a reciprocal recognition of each other’s right to an opinion and freedom to act as long as this was related to the Other’s interests. Here recognition refers to how the Self assumes the Other as being free (ontological assumption), to an awareness of the Other’s situation or reality (epistemological relation) but also to a moral relation in terms of the Self’s responsibility for the Other’s worth, dignity and inviolability as person and individual (ethical relation). This kind of theory is not reductionist in that it would approach the relation between individuals either from an ethical or an epistemological perspective, they are considered as two parallel and equally fundamental perspectives on one and the same relation. The position we develop here draws on the seminal studies of German, modern educational theory and later developments thereof (Benner, 1991). A crucial step was taken in that Fichte, in 1796, developed a critique of Kant’s way of explaining self-consciousness of freedom by referring to awareness of the moral law, thereby assuming, a priori, an intersubjective life-world (Fichte, 1992). Thus, Fichte’s innovation was to see consciousness of freedom as intersubjectively mediated by the Other as the self becomes aware of itself as free (experiences herself as free) only by being recognised and treated by another as having the potentiality to move beyond her present state (Uljens, 2002; Williams, 1997). The concept of recognition was developed further by Hegel and has influenced much later developments in education theory, especially Dewey and Mead.

In Charles Taylor’s (1994) interpretation, recognition must acknowledge certain features (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender) and embraces a positive attitude towards the individual for having that particular feature. In other words, you recognise the normative status of the other person as a free and equal person, but recognition transcends normativity. Misrecognition is the opposite, a relation that hinders or destroys persons’ successful relationships to themselves (Fanon, 1963; Honneth, 1992). Forms of recognition – respect, esteem, love and friendship – are seen to influence how subjects develop self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem (Honneth, 1992). From a pedagogical perspective, it is difficult to see forms of recognition as sufficient theoretical constructs in order to understand what educational influence is. In order to identify pedagogical and educational (leadership) actions among all possible mediating actions (e.g. care), we draw on the concepts of summoning to self-activity and Bildsamkeit (Benner, 1991; Mollenhauer, 2014; Uljens, 2002, 2015a).

Summoning to self-activity (Aufforderung zur Selbsta¨ tigkeit)

This concept explains how the school, teacher or a principal has a mediating role between the culture and the individual in the maintenance and development of the Other’s self-relations. According to Fichte (1796/1992), summons should be understood in a very specific meaning: we cannot summon somebody to gain the state of consciousness. Rather, summoning assumes there is somebody to be summoned before and should be understood only as an invitation to the Other’s self-activity. An act of summons is the impulse to cultural self-reflection made on the part of a reasonable human being in developing into a culturally reasoning subject. In terms of school leadership, the act of invitation or summons is directed towards a teacher or student’s potentiality and forces the latter to become aware of his own freedom as a cultural and political being and ability to realise his own aims. Education works with this double openness; the educator lives with the unanswerable question.
The relation between education and society, that is, the culture, respectively, as a relation between education and politics, economy and culture. How do we define the relation between institutional education and other societal forms of practice, for example, politics, economics and culture? How are the dynamics between, for example, education and politics explained? In the attempt to understand how education (and leadership thereof) is related to politics, economy and culture, we must first negotiate a path through the various extant explanations in the history of education.

First, a pre-modern mode of thought understands education as being located within the existing society or culture. This socialisation-oriented model of education emphasises the task of education as preparing the individual for an existing society and culture wherein societal practices and norms function as the guiding principles. In this model, educational leadership is subordinated to societal practices. Here, education does not have any developmental or transformative role with respect to the existing society, but rather is preparatory in character. The power of societal transformation lies beyond education, and as a consequence, education is reduced to socialisation.

The second is in contrast to the reproduction-oriented model, since Rousseau education theory has learned to conceptualise education as a revolutionary force with respect to societal practices. In its most radical or critical form, revolutionary or transformation-oriented education is not only disconnected from society but also allows itself to be positioned as superordinate with respect to societal interests (Benner, 1991).

A third, more centrist, view would combine the so-called social reproduction and social transformation perspectives; however, such centrist views are also combining normative values and interests. The similarity among these three positions is their normativity, meaning that a predetermined or culturally given set of values guides educational practice. In addition, these values are defined irrespective of the educational leader’s own interests.

A fourth line of reasoning, a non-affirmative position, opposes all the above-mentioned ones by criticising them for their normative nature (Benner, 1991). Both the reproduction and the transformation-oriented models are normative in the sense that what is either valuable in an existing society or valued as ideal for a future society is decided upon in advance. Therefore, it is supposed that the previous models run the risk of indoctrination and of turning educational leadership into a technological profession where results are related to values external to the profession. Another problem is that these models do not leave room for developing the principal’s, teacher or learner’s ability to decide upon what is to be considered valuable and meaningful. If socialisation would be called positive education, then the non-affirmative position defended here would represent a form of discursive counter education, a pedagogy challenging normality without defining in advance how the future should look like....
In this fourth position, since the future is thought to be undetermined and the question of morality is something that cannot ultimately be decided in advance, the individual’s reflective ability – cultural self-awareness and self-determination – is seen as an ability that must be developed. In this last model, education is seen in a non-hierarchical relation to politics, culture and economy. Education is not solely placed either ‘outside’ or ‘inside’ the society and is thus not either super or subordinated with respect to society, but attempts to mediate between the two. In this non-hierarchical conceptualisation, educational institutions are given relative independence with respect to societal and other interests. It is this discursive space that both allows for and requires reflective, professional educational leaders on each level of the education system.

From a non-hierarchical and non-affirmative perspective, educational leadership is leadership that sustains democracy but by problematising ethos with respect to prevailing concepts of democracy, related to an image of citizenship. In this sense, non-affirmative theory of education is truly discursive. From this point of view, education is allowed to critically examine the political system within which it operates, but it also leaves room for politics to be reflective and critical about contemporary education and educational leaders. The same relation occurs between education and economics: education must prepare individuals for an existing working life, but in such a way that the individual may transcend existing ways of working. In sum, the non-hierarchical position to the relation between school and society accepts that:

- School prepares individuals for an existing world – though it does so in a problematising, non-affirmative fashion, not confirming a present state of affairs.
- Democratic ideals are defended in a questioning way: education prepares individuals for participation in societal political practices and change.
- Human freedom is assumed – from provocation (intervention) to self-activity.
- The question of the good life remains an open question.
- A relative degree of freedom is guaranteed for the state, district, principal, teacher and ultimately, for the student.

In the next section, we consider discursive institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008) that supports and is supported by the positioning made above and offers a language for talking about educational leadership that fills in the missing link between Didaktik/curriculum research and leadership studies (e.g. discursive relationships among ideas, curriculum, agency, and structure; the interplay among societal aims translated into content, methods and planning and the social interactions around these in educational or societal institutions).

**Discursive institutionalism**

As we see ‘curriculum work as educational leadership’ occurring within and between different levels, this means that it is important to highlight mechanisms through which the political will form and its results (ideas) transform or find their way, in cooperation with professional expertise, into a ‘pedagogical agenda’ by being communicated to practitioners. Curriculum/Didaktik and leadership studies identify several levels of activity, considered relevant for understanding the direct and indirect top-down/bottom-up dynamics between, within and across these levels. The so-called first-order educational leadership refers here to teachers’ leading the students’ study activities in the teaching–studying–learning process. Second-order educational leadership shifts level and focus to the principals’ leadership of teachers’ teaching activities and the school as a collective organisation. Third-order educational leadership again shifts level and focus to leaders who lead other leaders (e.g. municipal superintendents leading principals). Fourth-order leadership involves developing and deciding about new national and state policies and curricula on a level authorised to establish laws, clearly a very different kind of educational leadership. As a result of recent political and economic aggregation processes, globalisation, a transnational, sixth level of analysis as well as a cosmopolitan perspective has accentuated (Beck, 2006). Typically, contemporary Didaktik, varieties of curriculum studies, leadership research and policy analysis and governance research have turned their main focus on typical one or two levels. We perceive of discursive institutionalism as offering a complementary and fruitful approach to understanding how educational policies, ideas and values (curriculum) relate to administrative processes on different levels. As we see it, discursive institutionalism itself presupposes a non-hierarchical understanding of societal forms of practice.

According to Schmidt (2008), discursive institutionalism aims at understanding how cognitive ideas (problems identification) and normative ideas (values that legitimise problems) are developed and communicated across societal, philosophical, policy and program levels. This point is important for our framework in that it explains the interplay among societal values and aims, policies and program interactions. The term discourse refers not only to structure (what is said, or where or how) but also to agency (who said what to whom). Specifically, Schmidt (2008) argues that ideas operate as coordinative and communicative discourses within and between levels and in one of four directions. The first direction is top-down, meaning that policy elites generate and communicate ideas to the public, creating a master discourse, which inspires
public debates and requires mediation. Second, discourses move bottom up, such as when social activists inspire mass protest against a policy or program, creating a counter discourse in mass media. Third, discursive interaction may remain solely at the level of civil society in the public sphere. Finally, there may be no arrows between coordinative and communicative discourses. Important questions are related to which way the arrows go – top-down, top-to-top, or bottom-up – and who is seen as the carrier of ideas (Schmidt, 2008). Schmidt’s work on discursive institutionalism, thus, enhances our understandings about how curriculum work/leadership – defined as ideas and discourse – may be communicated (and by whom) within and across macro (e.g. societal, policy) and micro (program, school) institutional levels.

Through vertical negotiations, political will transform into a pedagogical agenda (policy) by being communicated to practitioners but agents’ perceptions and enactments are also communicated back to the policy formulating process. The vertical discourses sometimes pass levels in between, like when transnational organisations like OECD communicate learning results directly to the schools without communicating these results to national authorities. The PISA process also demonstrates how result of evaluation is intended as influencing future curriculum work. Horizontal dialogues occur on all levels, including cooperative discourses within each level, and also between politicians and the administration.

Schmidt’s (2008) discursive institutionalism provides a new point of departure to consider the ‘institutional’ or ‘structural’ dimensions, particularly those that are evident in later deliberative (eg. Roth, 2001) and discourse-oriented curriculum theory. Discourse-oriented curriculum theory provides a language for talking about the human interactive and interpersonal dimensions of any level, from classroom to transnational. Discursive institutionalism acknowledges the system – laws, policy documents, task descriptions, financing systems – that lies beyond individuals’ everyday leadership practices. This position is coherent with the non-hierarchical view of the relation between societal practices in a democracy. The non-hierarchical point of departure offers us the principled position or rationale to approach both interactional-individual and institutional structural levels from a discursive perspective. At the same time, with its grounding in public administration, Schmidt’s (2008) discursive institutionalism does not have an underlying educational language or theory of education. Thus, we consider deliberative and discourse-oriented curriculum theory and classic concepts from educational philosophy described previously (recognition, summoning, Bildsamkeit,) as well as discursive institutionalism in our framework.

Coherent with discursive institutionalism, discourse-oriented curriculum theory and the core concepts of modern educational theory described above, a curriculum is here viewed as a systematic interruption in the practitioner’s way of understanding herself and carrying out one’s professional tasks. We see curriculum work as an interruption in the Other’s relation to herself, other persons and the world (Honneth, 1992, 1995). This recognition-based Hegelian philosophy provides a general frame for understanding how the curriculum itself as well the construction process, works, and is used, as a pedagogical intervention in order to influence. Here leadership influence does not mean support for implementation of ready-made ideas but invitation to dialogue. In doing so, educational leadership as curriculum work recognises 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 a curriculum activity are, obviously, also in the hands of the receivers enacting these intentions. The curriculum making discourse as invitation to self-activity and self-formation creates spaces within and between institutional levels. By introducing these concepts, we create a more coherent language for school and district, and curriculum work, educational leadership and school development activity, using the very same concepts that are relevant in describing the core object of curriculum theory and Didaktik, the teaching—studying—learning process.

Discussion and conclusions

This article presents a common general framework that brings two significant but yet unfortunately disparate fields (curriculum theory, leadership studies) closer together along with critical understandings from discursive institutionalism. Our framework moves beyond the limitations of curriculum theory/Didaktik (i.e. the lack of attention to the interplay between aims, contents, methods and leadership roles at various levels, the normative nature of dominant curriculum theories and their regulatory and transformational aims and underlying epistemologies and ontologies; limited language to talk about various systems). Discursive institutionalism, combined with classic educational philosophy concepts (recognition, summoning, Bildsamkeit), creates a language for curriculum work and other human—institutional interactions, including those concerning the broader system (e.g. law, policy documents). In our framework, then, curriculum theory/Didaktik (societal aims, content, methods, planning), leadership/institutional studies (structure) and policy (ideas) now complete each other conceptually.

Further, our framework is non-hierarchical, critical and constructive but not in the normative fashion that has characterised dominant Anglo-American curriculum theory and has rendered German Didaktik static over time. Rather, this position supports individual leaders (both subjects and objects), including adult leaders from
all five levels (classrooms, schools, districts, states/national agencies and transnational agencies), and influences relations among them relations that are to be reflective without limiting Others’ freedom, accepting both aims, social preparation and transformation, but in new ways. Thus, we use the institutional theory term levels to reflect a relative autonomy in curriculum work occurring within and between various institutions, yet we recognise the interdependent nature of curriculum work—leadership or holonomy (Lichnerowicz, 1976) occurring within and between these levels. Educational leadership, including curriculum work is, thus, conceptualised as:

A non-affirmative, critical-interpretative and cultural—historical distributed multiprofessional practice carried out on different levels of the educational system, operating between different cultures, epistemologies (knowledge practices) and value spheres (ethics and politics) where professional actors, through their roles (tasks) and persons, based on a recognition of the Other’s potentiality, reality and possibility, aim at supporting teachers, principals and students by summoning (inviting, intervening, demanding, supporting provocation) to engage in the transcendence of one’s current pedagogical work (Bildsamkeit). As such, curriculum work and leadership may be accomplished through activities such as developing routines and cultures of change, in order to create dynamic and reflected teaching opportunities, so that students become able to grow into an existing world while being prepared to change it according to their interests as related to others in a deliberative democracy.

Although a complete discussion of education as a cultural and historical phenomenon is beyond the scope of this article, the general principles discussed in this paper are anchored in philosophy and general education (German: Allgemeine pädagogik), as well as theory of culturally and historically developed institutional processes. For instance, contemporary curriculum work in the midst of globalisation and recent curriculum harmonisation (e.g. policy trends towards nationalised curriculum, evaluation and multicultural education) involves questions of how to create unity in increasingly pluralistic nation states. Whose culture is to be recognised and pluralities are not new. Historically, a similar movement towards the establishment of modern nation states (in the 18th and 19th centuries) required a new approach to establish and sustain a relation between national and cultural collective unity (sense of belonging) and individual and regional plurality.

In closing, we hope our general framework may inform a new education field for theorising curriculum/Didaktik and leadership according to which leadership and teaching professions may be conceptualised in a coherent way, not following different theoretical logics. Such a new research field may also be productive for schools as reflective professional learning communities being critically policy aware in their curriculum content and pedagogical developmental work.

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**Biographies**

**Dr. Michael Uljens** is Chair Professor of Education at Åbo Akademi University, Finland, since 2003. Before he held a chair at Helsinki university, and has been visiting researcher in Gothenburg, Berlin and Tucson, Arizona. His research focuses philosophy of education, Didaktik and educational leadership. He is the author of Allmän pedagogik and School Didactics and Learning (Psychology Press) and co-editor (with Rose Ylimaki) of a forthcoming volume, *Theory of Educational Leadership as Curriculum Work: Towards a Comparative, International Dialogue on Curriculum Theory and Leadership Research* (Springer-Kluwer).

**Dr. Rose Ylimaki** is Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy at the University of Arizona. She locates her work at the intersection of curriculum theory, educational leadership studies, and policy studies with articles appearing in the American Educational Research Journal and Educational Administration Quarterly among others. She is the author of *Critical Curriculum Leadership* (Rutledge) and a co-editor (with Michael Uljens) of a forthcoming volume, *Theory of Educational Leadership as Curriculum Work: Towards a Comparative, International Dialogue on Curriculum Theory and Leadership Research* (Springer-Kluwer).