



WELSmain 2021 - Abstracts

29.09.2021, 15.30 – 16.30 CEST

R6 Educational Policy and Governance

Dr. Jeffrey B. Hall, University of Oslo, Norway

Title: School principals and school superintendents as institutional entrepreneurs: Handling organizational tensions in the planning and enactment of the renewed state curriculum

School principals and school superintendents play an active role as translators of policy and expectations, clearly expressed through e.g. regulations and core curriculum, thus functioning as institutional entrepreneurs (Moos et al., 2016; Uljens & Ylimaki, 2017). Using the case of the current renewal of the national curriculum (LK20) in four municipalities in Norway, the paper investigates how key actors engage and cooperate in dynamic intra- and inter-institutional work to accommodate such demands. Situated within a larger longitudinal research and evaluation project (2019-2025), the paper draws on a larger body of qualitative data collected in 2019-2020, consisting of policy documents, semi-structured interviews and observations of staff meetings. In addition, a quantitative survey was carried out among a nation-wide sample of principals in compulsory and upper-secondary schools. This sub-study focuses specifically on interviews with school principals and municipal superintendents (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Analytically, the study draws on institutional theory, more specifically the concept of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial work in organizations (Author A, xx; Hardy & Maguire, 2008). Based on analysis of interview material, the findings exemplify the perceptions of these policy actors concerning tensions and handling of tensions within and across institutional boundaries. One vital finding across the data material is the need for an early start and allocating enough time; several school superintendents and principals point to time as the decisive factor. Secondly, school superintendents highlight the need for schools to advance at their own pace and to develop a collective culture based on sharing.



Sigríður Margrét Sigurðardóttir, University of Akureyri, Iceland

Title: Characteristics of educational leadership practices at the municipal level in Iceland

As research on educational leadership has proven its importance in school success, such as professional development and student's outcome and wellbeing, the attention has moved towards the leadership practices of districts or municipalities in this regard. In countries like Iceland where municipalities also tend to be the school's owner it becomes especially important to investigate their role and influence in the leadership chain. In this paper the characteristics of educational leadership practices at the municipal level in Iceland are investigated with emphasis on the influence of both political (school board, municipal council) and professional actors (superintendents, specialists at the school support services) on this leadership. Seven municipalities of different size, structure and geographical location were chosen as cases. Documents from the municipalities and their school's homepages on school policies and practices of school support services were analysed and individual interviews taken with 25 people, including superintendents, school support services specialists and principals. A cross-case analysis was used to identify patterns and shapes of this leadership practices. The findings indicate some common characteristics such as vague leadership at the municipal level regarding professional development of both principals and teachers. However, there are exceptions and a clear will to do better but lack of long-term policy, communication and common vision between the actors, and access to professional capital, seem to be hindrances that need to be overcome. Those findings provide a valuable insight into the complexity of educational leadership at a municipal level and the importance of coherence in that regard.



Dr. Arleta Suwalska, Arleta Suwalska Warsaw, Poland

Title: The roots of educational changes in the perspective of democracy challenges in England and Finland in the XXth century.

The purpose of presentation is to explain Finnish educational change in context of The Nordic Model of Social Democracy improved since 1963 versus English model of Neoliberal Democracy based on conservatism. The reform of education in Finland was supported by a new curriculum, different methods of teaching and access to the highest-quality education. It was not related to students' place of living, richness or annual income. As a result, Finnish educational equity phenomenon is represented in society. In addition, Finland got rid of the system of external inspection and improves the quality of teachers work. Finnish society appreciates high-trust to teachers' job and teachers follow the same values about vision of education. On the other side in England, privatization and centralization were the main pillars of the reform, introduced effective education for rich and lower quality for poor children of workers and peasants. The central government was responsible for the provision of educational services, educational policy, and planning the direction of educational system. The 1988 reform made stronger the ideological control of education, accelerated differentiation between schools and the gaps between school-leavers of general and vocational education. Furthermore, schools accepted reduction of education expenditure due to free-market educational policy. It led to a growing gap between school-leavers of general and vocational education.



Dr. Venesser Fernandes, Monash University Clayton, Australia

Title: Understanding, Leading and Managing Complexities in Data-Informed Decision Making Approaches at System and School Level

Research indicates that through a better understanding of what data-informed decision-making is, schools can and have made better use of their data for continuous school improvement (Fernandes & Henderson, 2020; Fernandes, 2020a; 2020b; Balaco, 2010; Renshaw et al, 2013; Smeed et al, 2011); and, are better able to manage the issues around change and the subsequent developments that schools as strategically oriented learning organisations are going through regularly (Fernandes, 2016). This study is a qualitative study using a case-study design. The cases studied were located at three levels of networked school governance situated within an independent school system in Australia. These levels include: leaders at national, state and individual schools level (N=4). The methodological orientation of this study has been based on an enquiry into these stakeholders' understanding, leading and managing of a data-informed decision-making and continuous school improvement approach to organisational change and development. The findings from this study suggest that school and system level leaders need to consider how they may shape and reshape their organisational culture especially when the environment around their network of schools has been changing rapidly, increasing in complexity and facing strong competition (Brooks and Normore, 2010). Coherence across three tiers of networked governance structures in school systems requires leaders at all three levels to be skilfully equipped and cognisant in leading and managing their teams. This is built through collaboration, consensus and cooperation across the three tiers of networked governance. Leadership practices at these levels need to be adaptive and strengths-based (Fernandes, 2020b).



Ilze Breedt, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Title: Stakeholder views of educational governance after a change in ownership of independent schools (PhD)

Stakeholder views of educational governance after a change in ownership of independent schools. Section 29 (2) of the Constitution of 1996 provides that "everyone has the right to establish and maintain, at their own expense, independent educational institutions" subject to certain requirements to ensure quality education to children. These independent schools provide freedom to parents to choose a school according to their preferences. Parents enrol their children in an independent school for different reasons among others with the expectation that they as parents as well as their children will receive value for their money such as small classes, better communication, and individual attention to learners. Independent schools represent the notions of investment and profitable business. Organisations listed on the JSE (Johannesburg Stock Exchange) invest in these schools. For these organisations, the shareholders become an important factor regarding decision making. The importance of the stakeholders for independent schools yet not clearly defined and constitute the major focus of this research. The erecting deeds of not-for-profit independent church schools stipulate an educational focus from a religious perspective and include a specific service to the stakeholders (teachers, parents and students). When profit-driven organisations started to buy these not-for-profit schools, a change in governance took place and different stakeholders view these changes from different viewpoints. In this research, a multiple case study will be used to describe the viewpoints of some of the stakeholders regarding the disadvantages and advantages of a change from not-for-profit governance to profit-driven governance.