

## A BRIEF INTELLECTUAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE PRESENT TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM POLICY LEADERSHIP CRISIS

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*Teaching might even be the greatest of the arts since the medium is the human mind and spirit.*

– John Steinbeck

The current education policy crisis has been widely documented from different angles and intellectual locales as in Apple (2006), Autio (2014), and Hargreaves et al. (2009), culminating in Pinar's (1995, 2006, 2013) several critiques of "The End of Public Education in The United States," which exposed his worries about the deliberate destruction of public education. The same trends Pinar refers to are recognizable in many Anglophone countries such as the UK (Goodson 2014) and also in the former education superpower Germany (Ertl 2006) in the aftermath of the German PISA shock. In universities, economists have begun to replace education professors as the experts in federally funded educational research. Diane Ravitch, who worked for President George H. W. Bush and initially introduced the triad *accountability, standardization, and privatization* as the guidelines of neoliberal education and curriculum policy reforms, completely changed her mind after the recognition of the detrimental effects of the Bush Regime's *No Child Left Behind* and has also criticized President Obama's reform initiative *Race to the Top* (Ravitch 2010). The Finnish education policy analyst Pasi Sahlberg terms the current education and curriculum policy mainstream the *Global Education Reform Movement (GERM)*, "the virus that is killing education" (Sahlberg 2011), and starkly contrasts it with the Finnish education reform strategy that will take a further step away from the Anglophone driven *accountability, standardization* and *privatization* reforms in the new 2016 Finnish National Curriculum Reform.

I approach the broadly and extensively treated crisis in education by theorizing and historicizing how the crisis is embodied in education policy and educational leadership. Instead of an ahistorical, a-theoretical chronicling of the crisis—‘things are not right as they are’—I would prefer to map a longer historical trajectory. My argument is that education policies have distinctive curriculum theory trajectories and, accordingly, current policies and leadership can be respectively recognized in those historical and theoretical trajectories. Curriculum theories ideally provide more comprehensive accounts across worldviews, political, cultural, social realities and psycho-social mediations than traditional, more or less disciplinary specific histories, such as psychologies and sociologies of education. This kind of work related to education policy analyses may offer a change of sceneries for alternative education and political visions by revealing historical, political and theoretical conditionings and contributors to the prevalent crisis.

In an effort to decipher the crisis in terms of curriculum theory, I will shortly describe the present state of transnational education policy from a point of curriculum theory. Two major narratives of curriculum theory, Anglo-American *Curriculum* and north-European *Bildung/Didaktik* have been experiencing a kind of practical, theoretically unspecified merging in education policy initiatives and practices (see later the case of Germany), and that state of affairs is, in my view, a major theoretical reason for the education crisis we are experiencing worldwide. For reasons of clarity and intellectual principle, I will use here *Bildung* and drop out the attributed term *Didaktik*, or its English version, *didactics*, that is often conceptually stained and has lost its original meaning in English usage to the point of caricature, as in David Hamilton’s humorous depiction: a common core image of didactics as “dullness combined with dogma”. Yet, in my view, one viable and sustainable alternative to the current crisis might be to critically reactivate the intellectual and symbolic legacy of *Bildung* to balance the biased excesses of the Anglophone tradition and its worldwide spread.

The lines of argumentation between Curriculum and *Bildung* do not strictly follow geographical borders, and there are certain mismatches between curriculum theories and education policies, leadership approaches and practices adopted. Just to take two examples, in two leading neoliberal states, the United States and England, the mismatch between the scholarship of William Pinar (2004, 2006, 2011) and Ivor Goodson (2014) and the current education policies in their countries could hardly be more drastic. Although their scholarship does not directly draw upon north European *Bildung* traditions, the kindred intellectual aims are obvious: To

understand education more broadly beyond instrumentalism and method fetishism and the pretended scientific objectivity and political neutrality present in positivist-empiricist psychological and sociological studies of education. Instead of ubiquitous and decontextualized “learning” theories as implicit but effective neoliberal policy determinants, Pinar and Goodson make efforts, amidst their neoliberal contexts, to name the world of education differently, to understand the complicated mediations between psyche, society and the interconnected world in more convincing and truthful ways. By suggesting new, postmodern theories that propose interdisciplinary mediations between autobiography, social structure and history as a necessary and substantial starting point and framework for education and curriculum theory, their scholarship essentially reshapes their own belongings but also carries the north European curriculum theory tradition forward. In doing so, it provides direction amidst the scarcity of European curriculum theorizing in the aftermath of the diminished German-speaking national and international role in education—and amidst the fragmentation that has resulted from the neoliberal policies of the Scandinavian *Bildung* block.

The story of the former education superpower, Germany, and the intellectual atrophy of education and curriculum guidelines during the last decades is an illustrative allegory about the grip of intense interaction between neoliberalism and atheoretical, politically and historically blind empiricist education research. German national identity, according to Jurgen Habermas (1996), “irreversibly tainted since the Holocaust,” may be indirectly reflected also in the cessation in the development of German curriculum theory (“general didactics”), and it is therefore now a professional and intellectual responsibility for others to continue that most significant tradition by its critical reactivation:

In Germany, it has become quiet around general didactics. ... the theoretical situation has been basically stable for decades. ... this is surprising because one might perhaps expect, given the widespread talk about the crisis in instruction, in school, and the teaching profession, that the wheat of didactics would bloom on a theoretical level. Just the opposite is the case! In general didactics, there has been no theoretical discussion worth speaking of for around 2 decades ... *genuine theoretical discussion has been largely replaced by the development and defense of certain teaching methods on a more practical level* (Terhart in Autio 2006, 123, my emphasis).

Since Terhart's account, Germany has been adopting the Anglophone driven neoliberal policy aims of accountability and standardization together with the former *Bildung* Scandinavian countries: Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Finland, thus far, is a solitary exception. Comparable to the Sputnik shock in the 1950s USA, Germany experienced a PISA shock in 2001 with parallel education reform pressures that created a debate about the conflation between the concept of knowledge and competences, skills and performances. Apart from the shock of the lower than expected PISA results, the debate in Germany created a theoretical and conceptual shock with significant consequences from the perspective of curriculum theory and educational leadership. To the proponents of traditional *Bildung* concepts, a scandalous move by some German PISA experts, was to suggest the concept of *competence* as a new *Bildung* concept: "*Kompetenz—ein neuer Bildungsbegriff.*"

It is important to note ... that the merging of competencies and *Bildung* is not solely an act by historically blind empiricists ... Heinz-Elmar Tenorth, a genuine historian of education, did the very same thing (Tenorth 2008): "*Bildung* and literacy, basic skills and modes of handling higher culture do not depict disjunctive classes of knowledge and behavioral patterns but specific developments of a single and identical dimension of human practice" (Tröhler 2011, 196).

Here, in the unexpected context of *Bildung*, we witness a single instance of neoliberalism as 'a theory of everything,' a discourse on education, knowledge and subjectivity, all unspecified and conflated together as "a single and identical dimension of human practice ", and, reduced to a sheer aggregate of instrumental skills and competences (Autio, in press).

The example is a generalizable index of the current state of *Bildung* in its homeland Germany, where it is increasingly colonized in the aftermath of the German PISA shock by the instrumentalism of Anglo-American psychologized Curriculum as the following enthusiastic account testifies:

PISA has led to the *growing importance of principles such as outcome control, competence orientation and external assessment*. The post-PISA academic discourse in Germany can be characterised by the re-orientation of educational studies towards a greater emphasis on the empirical research of pedagogic practice (*empirische Unterrichtsforschung*) (Ertl 2006, 619, my emphasis).

Hence as this account states, the education space is colonized by “the growing importance of principles such as outcome control, competence orientation and external assessment” even on the home ground of *Bildung*: the virus, the Global Education Reform Model (GERM) “that is killing education” (Sahlberg 2011) is adventitiously reaching Germany herself. To bind “empirical research of pedagogic practice” with “principles such as outcome control, competence orientation and external assessment” turns into a seamless incarnation of the neoliberal “killing virus”.

More generally, in my brief analysis here, I deal with two interrelated highly significant and detrimental implications of the GERM. The first deals with democracy—or the current glaring shortage of it—and the other with the positioning of the teacher within the education system as a key to sustainable and successful education policy and leadership.

### **A Prelude to Neoliberal Policies of Education: From Democratic Ideals to the Theory and Science-driven Stranglehold of Instrumentalism**

Since antiquity, democracy has been considered the quintessence of education in the Western world: basically education is *of* and *for* democracy. The key insight of democracy is deeply educational: the actualization of the potential of every individual as in Socrates’s maieutic, which aims to bring a person’s latent ideas into clear consciousness. Socrates’s pedagogic idea was politically expanded in Plato’s Republic as an idea of the educated public as a necessary precondition for a working democratic society. This twin dynamic between self and society introduced by Socrates and Plato, then decisively rephrased by Jean Jacques Rousseau’s *Emile* (1762) as a start for modern education, provided the platform for the north European *Bildung* concept as a renaissance of comprehensive classical political and educational thinking that was not restricted to Europe, but was also adopted, in particular, by John Dewey in the United States. We can argue that Dewey belonged to the *Bildung* camp (he even wrote his PhD on G.F.W. Hegel (1770-1831)), and his ideas balanced the strong instrumental ambience already present in his lifetime in the American education space with *Bildung*’s attention to larger purposes. The already strong dominance of instrumentality, ‘value free’ methodological orientation, and “scientific management” as drivers of education policy contributed to the fact that “Dewey’s ideas were never broadly and deeply integrated into the practices of American public schools, though some of his values and terms were widespread”

(Palmer et al. 2002, 177-178). In addition, Dewey's deeper values were also arguably watered down towards instrumentality by his Pragmatism: Pragmatism can be seen as amenable to the political status quo: questions of how and what rather than why render the political, educational and organizational agenda of pragmatism.

The Deweyan democratic legacy was finally muted in U.S. official education policy by the world political events after WWII that created the springboard for defensive and educationally detrimental education reforms that were, paradoxically, recently intensified after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Cold War culminated in the Sputnik Shock of 1957, when the Russians seemed to win the first match in the space race by sending the kerosene-driven Sputnik rocket on an earth-cycling orbit. The political consequences resulted in fundamental change in the reform mindset in the U.S. education: "... *the enemy was not only the Russians but also the progressive educational ideology that was dominant in the United States at that time, supported by philosophers of education and the powerful teachers' unions*" (Tröhler 2013, 200, my emphasis). The establishment of the OECD in the aftermath of the Sputnik Crisis institutionalized the twin effort to "reform" what was then seen as an overly progressive approach to U.S. education and to combat the Soviet Union's assumed technological and educational superiority by the "educationalization of the Cold War" (Tröhler *ibid*). Symptomatic of the educational paradigm change that followed was the first founding meeting of the OECD, which was occupied by representatives of the military and economy without a single keynote by an education expert (Tröhler 2011, 205). The reactive and defensive political and economic agenda dictated a new, radically narrowed framework for education and curriculum: Mathematics, sciences, and foreign languages as the "core curriculum", almost identical to the PISA trilogy of today.

The founding event of the OECD represents a turning point when education policy, particularly assessment and evaluation as a natural part of pedagogic process and teachers' work, are outsourced to external, quasi-authoritative sources of the testing industry, who gain that authority through their relationships with representatives from the world of educational psychology. In academic terms, the Sputnik shock prompted the shift from educational philosophy to psychology as an intellectual core of the curriculum and teacher education programs. The final impetus for assessment and testing as a core of education policy and educational leadership came some years later, in 1966, from the "second largest social science survey in history", lead by the University of Chicago sociologist James S. Coleman: *Equality of Educational Opportunity Study*. What was striking and what made it "the most

dangerous report in American education” (Moynihan, in Pinar 2006, 123) is that “After Coleman ... equal opportunity was to be measured by ‘outputs,’ among these (in Coleman’s study) the test scores of 570,000 children. Only if students from differing groups scored roughly the same scores, Coleman insisted, could we conclude there was equal educational opportunity” (Pinar 2006, 124).

Complicit in the powerful standardizing efforts is the role of educational psychology, which meant a shift from pragmatic philosophy to schematic, radically simplified notions of human learning by behaviorism and cognitive theory:

The educationalization of the Cold War in the United States marked a transformation of the dominant reference discipline for education, for it switched from philosophy to psychology, more precisely from popular interpretation of Pragmatism to cognitive psychology, which was at its outset in the late 1950s cognitive theory being the most important academic reference of PISA today, as the stakeholders admit themselves (Tröhler 2013, 201).

The switch from philosophy to psychology also meant—paradoxically—the exchange of the goal of an embodied, contextualized and knowledgeable subject for an abstract, reified and universal notion of “learning.” The whole historical array of educational psychologies from American Herbartianism (1890-1900) to behaviorism to cognitive theories to “Learning Sciences” is fundamentally a-psychological by nature as these psychologies lack any substantive reference to the human psyche as a distinctive, complex entity *sui generis*: if consciousness is superfluous why do we have it? (Taubman 2009). For behaviorist-cognitivist methodology, consciousness was from the very start too complicated, a chaotic and messy phenomenon. The study of consciousness was overtaken by methods that had used outer observation of material objects and phenomena by natural sciences since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The development of the study of outer behavior (behaviorism) and its methodological internalization for the description of mental functioning (cognitivism) took place in accordance with the control politics of positivist agendas in the spirit of Auguste Comte (1798-1857): *To see in order to predict and control*.

The trend toward *a priori* schematizing human consciousness for methodological reasons is closely related to modernism, with its highly influential Cartesian emphasis on Method in the creation of new knowledge and the rise of the natural sciences in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Autio 2006). One of the most pivotal figures in the

history of education, Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841), had ambivalent and contrasting alternatives for the notions of psychology (Blass 1978) with far-reaching implications for both European and Anglo-American developments of education and curriculum theory. Herbart, as a follower of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) in Königsberg (today's Russian Kaliningrad), made efforts to combine *freedom*— 'the *why* capability', characteristic of human subjectivity as a manifestation of creativity and the possibility to act and think otherwise—with *causal necessity*. For Herbart, the intellectual 'mission impossible' was to unite the moral end of education—the idea of inner freedom manifested as knowledgeable, capable and moral character, affected but not exclusively determined by external powers and authorities—with deterministic and exact ideals of scientific psychology developed in accordance with the methodology of the natural sciences (Autio 2006, 105). "Judgmental reason" represents a core of curriculum theories in the *Bildung* tradition and a necessary element in sustainable life skills: self-determination and democracy presupposes free agency of the knowledgeable and embodied subject as contrasted with the deterministic and abstract views of the human subject advocated by methodologies adopted in determinist cog-in-the-machine behaviorist and cognitive theories in education. As closed systems (Doll 1993), these determinist theories imitate obsolete ideas of natural science, particularly classical mechanics, which were present already in Herbart's first alternative of psychology, "mechanics of mind", in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This unbridgeable split required educators to live in two radically differing intellectual alternatives for Western curriculum theory: Northern European *Bildung* and Anglo-American Curriculum. The European concept of curriculum initiated by Humboldt suggested that the cognitive, practical and aesthetic dimensions of curriculum are to be subordinated to the fourth dimension, the Moral one, (*Vernunft*) (Klafki 1991), which represents the decisive instance of human subjectivity, freedom, and self-determination that would guarantee the *educative, creative, and transformative nature of education*. The practical and democratic implication for classroom practice is that teachers and students alike are called to use their free evaluative faculties to enrich the educative experience of all participants by subjectively scrutinizing the meaning(fullness) and transformative potential of the learned content and its context: curriculum as a complicated conversation (Pinar 2013). Kant himself seemed to warn in his pedagogic lectures of the present colonization and standardization of psyche, reason and educational experience by psychological, administrative and commercial instrumentalism (Kant in Autio 2006, 102):



Intelligence divorced from judgment produces nothing but foolishness. Understanding is the knowledge of the general. Judgment is the application of general to the particular. Reason is the power of understanding the connection between the general and the particular.

The reflective, evaluative, free faculty of a human mind with its contextualized, embodied focus on “the primacy of the particular” (Pinar) also features prominently in Dilthey’s theory of science. Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), a pioneer of hermeneutics, proposed that in the natural sciences we seek to *explain* phenomena in terms of cause and effect; in the human and social sciences, we seek to *understand* meanings in terms of relations between parts and a whole (Kant above).

**The Theory of Everything:  
“Economic Thought is Coterminous with Rationality”**

In contrast to the continental and American *Reconceptualist* traditions characterized above (Pinar’s et al. 1995), the pseudo-causal *Explanation* tradition—teaching as a cause and learning an effect—provides a crude and scientific theory of legitimation for current policies of education. Its political parallel, neoliberalism, gained a massive political momentum after the collapse of the Soviet Union—characterized even as an apex of the cultural evolution of humankind à la Fukuyama (Fukuyama 1992) —and further intensified the commodification and standardization of education. Distinctive to neoliberalism as a perverted form of liberal democracy is a reduction of all spheres of human action to the economy; “economic thought is coterminous with rationality” (Couldry 2012). Neoliberal policies deliberately advocate the ahistorical, apolitical, a-theoretical laboratory or field experiment imitation of education research that still reflects the modernist, fundamentalist “quest for certainty” posture in its interpretations of educational reality (Dewey 1929).

Paradoxically enough, the period of tumultuous change and instability of financial and economic systems since 2000 that reached the pinnacle in the 2007 financial crisis has not prevented the forces of corporatization from losing their hold on the social infrastructure (Goodson 2014, 14). The neoliberal mindset advocates seeing educational leadership in terms of school-as-a-business and relies upon a respective business-like ‘profit projections’ of standardized test scores. Despite the recognized failure of the new economy to create a sustainable new world order, transnational education and curriculum policy holds to the imitation of this failed corporate logic

as the educational rule: The “bottom line” in business is structurally and ideologically in congruence with the tested “learning outcomes” in education (Autio 2016, 113).

These developments signal a pervasive sense of inversion at many levels, for instance, the move from a market economy to becoming a market society—“everything is now saleable and available as a site of profit making” (Sandel, in Goodson 2014, 14). From a curriculum and educational leadership perspective, if we are still able to think of education as a prime site for and of democracy, “the inversion of democracy” by neoliberalism would alarmingly mean that the repudiation of “a system that was once set up to represent the people against vested power now seems to represent vested power (especially corporate power) against the people” (Goodson *ibid.*). Education policy and leadership can provide a tacit vehicle for these undemocratic ideals to creep into the socialization of future generations in advanced societies as, for instance, the US *Race to the Top* policy program, manifest by the absence of any explicit reference to democracy, education and personality ideals in any broader or holistic sense. A sense of national belonging is still present, but is subordinated to the assumedly more significant ideals of the market (Autio 2016, 113).

Indeed, “neoliberalism has become a ‘theory of everything’ providing a pervasive account of self and identity, knowledge and information, economy and government” (Mirowski in Goodson 2014, 14). In terms of society and governance, “we would seem to be entering a period of ‘corporate rule’, where all criteria fit the prevailing neo-liberal dogma and where ... even alternative imaginary possibilities are clinically and forcefully expunged” (Goodson 2014, 114).

### **Beyond the Neoliberal Corporate Rule and the Positioning of the Teacher?**

Though in Goodson’s relentless critique the educational scene seems seamlessly sieged system-wide by corporate rule, this politically and intellectually atrophied, disturbing scene may still force our thinking to seek “alternative imaginary possibilities”. If we credit Ivor Goodson with his perception of the curriculum as “a prism, a litmus test, through which to see and test societal health and character” (Goodson 2014, 14), likewise the positioning of the teacher within the curriculum is the litmus test of educational leadership. Leadership at its best is about demonstrating the values we believe in.

The values of neoliberal education and its leadership policies are explicitly demonstrated in the positioning of the teacher. The present manifestation of instrumental values has a longer history of internal developments in education; its policies have only been made more visible by the powerful rise of neoliberalism since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In retrospect—and which the experience of two and half decades confirms—the winner seems to be, not democracy as believed, but a new totalitarianism by the corporate rule (Couldry 2012), which has strongly affected the provision of education. Instead of the guiding political Western motors since the Enlightenment and the French revolution of, *liberty, equality and solidarity*, the key driver in the current political context of neoliberalism is the ubiquitous cost-benefit ratio with standardization, control and surveillance traversing across all societal and education institutions. Manfred Steger (2009, 11) identifies four main empirical dimensions of globalization: economic, political, cultural, and ecological with a fifth dimension, the ideological, cutting across the other four. The ideological dimension, according to Steger, is filled with a range of norms, claims, beliefs, and narratives about the phenomenon itself. More distinctively, Nick Couldry (2012) sees neoliberalism and economic globalization as not just cutting across the other dimensions of globalization: in the big picture, economic globalization is the master narrative that is colonizing political, cultural and ecological globalization; neoliberal democracy is an oxymoron. The increasing evidence of the social and political failure of economic globalization, neoliberalism, implies political consequences, one of the most obvious being what the German columnist Jochen Bittner (2016) for *The New York Times* terms *orderism*: “

... it is ideological without being an ideology. It is mercurial, pragmatic and cynical; its meaning and values change to fit the circumstances. ... Orderism prioritizes stability over democracy and offers an alternative to the moral abyss of laissez-faire societies. Russia stands as a model for this new social contract. ... What is striking, though, is how compatible orderism is with the attitudes of many voters in the United States and Europe. Donald J. Trump's campaign boils down to a promise of tough order. And the decision of British voters to leave the European Union, catalyzed by the promise of the U.K. Independence Party and others of an orderly, independent England, was nothing but an attempt to stop the frightening and discomfiting effects of globalization.

The long standing Cartesian *Culture of Method* (Autio 2006) with its positivist belief system and isolated variables insufficiently informed by big pictures—often technically sophisticated, but based upon an ideologically and psychologically naïve belief in mechanistic, “evidence-based” accounts of systems and behaviors—make education easy prey for neoliberalism. Neoliberalism has drastically intensified the historical detrimental grip of instrumentalism—encouraging a pedagogic variant of *orderism* in the teaching profession in most countries. For an educationally successful system, the crucial shortcoming in current neoliberal systems is the positioning of the teacher, as Westbury (2000) put it, as “the conduit of the system”. The theoretically flawed background assumption is to imagine the relation between teaching and learning as a cause-effect one that is supposed to legitimize the focus on ‘product’ and ‘outcomes’ of learning as an index of ‘effective’ teaching as discussed above. Consequentially, behaviorist and cognitivist learning theories as political constructs provide easy ways to bureaucratize the education system that directly affect in an alienating and harmful way teachers’ work and their professional self-identity and self-determination as individuals and collective.

Autio claims [American Herbartianism] reduced the complexity of education to “proceduralism” and instrumentality, rationalizing sequence that, in the US context, became behavioralized. ... Autio suggested that bureaucratic–administrative control became restated, in the United States, as the prediction of behavior (Pinar 2011, p. 185).

Awareness of the history and theory of science and its tacit social, cultural and political conditionings would be a *sine qua non* to look at educational settings in all their institutional-organizational and personal complexity and variance, rather than through distorting, reductionist universal methodologies, uncritically adopted by behaviorist and cognitivist inclined empirical researchers. We can for good reasons then claim that the intellectual stance of behaviorism and cognitivism works in tandem with the political, anti-democratic, “orderist” and totalitarian aspirations of neoliberalism. Pinar emphasizes the historical succession of the US mainstream educational policy logic with a comment that critically underlines the current political connection between behaviorist-cognitive psychology and neoliberal education orthodoxy:

Since *No Child Left Behind*, “behavior” itself has been reduced to test-taking. It is in this sense that I have asserted that accountability in the United States is a form of neo-fascism (Pinar 2011, p. 185).

What we need is to envisage curriculum, education policy and leadership in which the teacher's role is not causal but transformative and creative. This requirement is in congruence with what social theorists say about the consequences of the shift to postmodernity or a "second modernity." As Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim (Autio 2006, 161) point out, the move toward complexity has meant "a de-normalization" of roles:

Now, the individual must be much more the rule finder her/himself. Determinate judgment is replaced by "reflective judgment". Reflective judgment is not reflection because there is no universal to subsume the particular. In reflective judgment the capable individual must find the rule. Reflective judgment is always a question of uncertainty, of risk, but it always leaves the door open much more to innovation (Lash, in Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, cited in Autio 2006, 162).

Scott Lash's description of a capable individual in the current world of postmodernity could be a description of what "capable" teachers and pedagogic practice have always been and done. The teacher must find the rule instead of following the prescribed one: "good teacherhood is a personal quality" (Goodson 2014, 42); "teaching as a reflective practice" (Westbury et. al 2000), or teaching as "pedagogic artistry" (Henderson 2015) in the spirit of *Bildung* sharply contrast with pseudo-causal "evidence-based" and assessment-obsessed neoliberal education and leadership policies where, with glaring theoretical simplicity but political purposefulness:

the countries that have pursued neo-liberal reforms in the fastest and deepest manner, such as England, perform very poorly in educational standards. Meanwhile, those that have defended a social democratic vision and have explicitly valued professional autonomy, such as Finland, have produced top-rate educational standards. It would seem time to seriously scrutinise the neo-liberal orthodoxy in the field of education (Goodson 2014, 43-44).

Curriculum is necessarily in practice a "complicated conversation" and teaching is an activity where academic knowledge is threaded through the teacher's subjectivity; teaching in practice never takes place separated from all participants' subjective meaning making. That is why:

school curriculum guidelines must never be more than guidelines. Subjectively situated, historically attuned teachers must be free to follow wherever their imaginations and instincts lead them, acutely aware of the disciplinary knowledge which structures their ongoing inquiry and testimony. ... The teacher is in this sense an artist and complicated conversation is the teacher's medium ... It might be helpful to the teacher to reflect on what her or his intentions are, but "objectives" are hardly primary concerns. What matters is how complicated the conversation becomes. ... what students make of such knowledge, a fate hardly removed from the province of the teacher but never definitively dependent on the teacher. Even the most creative and provocative lessons can fall flat, as anyone knows. Attempting to force students' engagement (let alone learning) becomes autocratic if not mediated by the subjective knowledge teachers have of the individuals in their classroom. Moreover, what students make of their study may not be known, and then only by the students themselves, for years (Pinar 2011).

Pinar's account of the nature of curriculum and teaching makes more explicit what kind of intellectual leadership is required in sustainable education reforms and educational leadership: *"New research findings in education reform patently show that personal and professional commitment must exist at the heart of any new changes or reforms. Not only is it neutrally absent, it is in fact positively absent in the sense that there is a mixture of profound indifference and active hostility to ... changes and reforms"* (Goodson (2014, 16).

The failure in myriad reforms in education is partly due to the failure to recognize and acknowledge the complex dynamics and character of curriculum and teaching. The shortcoming is reflected across the professional span of being a teacher. Finnish experience tells us that brightest students interested in teaching are very sensitive to the intellectual, aesthetic, moral and organizational appeal of the profession. If the main principles of northern European and particularly Finnish curriculum (*Bildung*)—professional freedom and autonomy of highly educated teachers and public trust in them—is violated, the index of which is excessive external testing and measurement, the best students and teachers seem to leave the profession. The absence of trust toward teachers by the assessment industry is symptomatic of intellectual and ethical insensitivity in understanding education, curriculum and teaching—and by implication, the characteristics and dynamics of democracy.

According to Goodson (2014, 124), the crucial shortcoming of many education reforms is their focus on the least inspired and minimally involved part of the teaching force (usually 10-20 per cent) in their homogenous 'quality' interests of higher test scores. Such aims frustrate the best teachers (again 10-20 per cent), who optimally do their work supported by their subjective commitment, enthusiasm and their often informal professional networks and communities. The focus of reforms is critical: the commitment of a country's most talented teachers is a basic prerequisite for the successful implementation of any meaningful reforms. If these teachers are distracted by external measures of accountability, control and surveillance, their disenchantment and disengagement threaten to leave change and reform a hollow rhetoric. As Goodson argues:

This is, not least, because of their mentorship and leadership of the mainstream group of teachers. This group, comprising 60-70 per cent of honest, hardworking professionals, makes up the backbone of the teaching profession. The interplay of mentorship and leadership between the elite and the backbone is reciprocal and vital in motivating and defining the teaching workforce. It is also central in the maintenance of a sense of vocation and mission (Goodson 2014, 124).

"There is nothing more practical than a good theory" (Kurt Lewin): What makes the difference in the world of education—in educational policy in general and particularly in the professional position and identity of the teacher in the system—is closely related to the intellectual coordinates of the adopted curriculum theory. Apart from deliberate political manipulations, reasons for reform failures are theoretical shortcomings in behaviorist and cognitivist methodologies that obstruct dealing with the invisible yet significant worlds of individual subjects, which are always in play with external reality. Moral judgments, intentions, personal commitments and meanings are the core of transformative educative and educational phenomena and remain outside the methodological grasp of behaviorism and cognitive theories. The West's inherited fetish for 'objective' and 'neutral' method and the legacy of depoliticized empiricism in the valorization of positivist methodologies have left no space for historically, politically, culturally and autobiographically shaped subjective narrative and "complicated conversation" as genuine embodiments of human consciousness and as a platform for sustainable democracy and education worthy of its name.

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