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Principals as value-based leaders: Finnish primary school principals' views on values and
leadership

Master Thesis
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Intercultural Teacher Education
2020
18 May 2020

Oulun yliopisto

Kasvatustieteiden tiedekunta

Rehtorit arvojohtajina: suomalaisten peruskoulujen rehtoreiden näkemyksiä arvoista ja johtajuudesta (Anette Eksymä)

Pro gradu -tutkielma, 82 sivua, 1 liitesivu

Toukokuu 2020

Suomalaisia peruskoulujen rehtoreita voidaan kuvailla arvojohtajina, sillä koulumaailmassa on monia arvoja mitä koulujen tulisi implementoida, jo pelkästään opetus suunnitelman ja lainsäädännön näkökulmasta. Rehtoreiden työnkuvat voivat kuitenkin vaihdella paljon koulujen välillä. On arvioitu, että rehtoreiden työnkuva on menossa entistä holistisempaan suuntaan, jolloin on yhä hankalampaa määrittellä, mikä *ei* enää ole osa rehtoreiden työnkuvaa. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on kerätä rehtoreiden näkemyksiä siitä, miten he näkevät arvot ja niihin liittyvän arvojohtajuuden heidän työssään rehtoreina.

Tutkimuksen teoreettisessa viitekehyksessä tarkasteltiin arvoja ja johtajuutta kasvatuksen ja koulutuksen konteksteissa. Rehtorit johtajina pystyvät vaikuttamaan arvojen suunnitteluun, määrittelyyn, implementointiin sekä näkyvyyteen kouluissaan. Arvoista tulisi sopia yhteisesti, ne tulisi määrittellä selkeästi, sekä johtajan tulisi saada työntekijänsä seisomaan valittujen arvojen takana. Parhaimmissa tapauksissa työntekijät ottavat arvot mielellään omakseen, ja ovat ylpeitä edustaessaan näitä tiettyjä arvoja organisaation työntekijöinä. Joskus tietyt ulkoiset määrittelyt, kuten aika ja resurssit, voivat kuitenkin luoda haasteita arvotyöskentelyyn. Pelkästään arvojen nimeäminen voi olla haasteellista, puhumattakaan arvojen määrittelystä tai konkretisoinnista.

Tutkimuksen metodologinen lähestymistapa on laadullinen tapaustutkimus, jonka aineistoa käsitellään sisällönanalyysin keinoin. Haastattelussa rehtorit toivat toistuvasti esille arvojen tärkeyden, mutta arvotyöskentelyä oli kuitenkin harrastettu kouluissa vaihtelevasti. Kaikki rehtorit nimesivät heille henkilökohtaisesti sekä ammatillisesti tärkeitä arvoja, sekä koulun toimintakulttuureista nousevia arvoja. Vaikka arvot olivat jokaisessa koulussa läsnä, rehtorit toivat esille arvojen konkretisoinnin hankaluuden, kun arvoja yritetään viedä koulun toimintakulttuureihin. Joskus arvot nähtiin myös itsestäänselvyyksinä, ja itsestäänselvyyttä selitettiin muunmuassa piilo-opetus suunnitelman avulla. Kaikki koulut eivät olleet suunnitelleet arvoja yhdessä, vaan arvot oli annettu heille kaupungilta, tai arvot olivat jo ennestään läsnä koulussa. Ylipäätään arvotyöskentely nähtiin tärkeänä, ja rehtorit toivatkin esille, että arvokeskusteluille tulisi olla enemmän aikaa. Jos rehtoreiden työnkuva on menossa yhä enemmän hallinnollisempaan suuntaan, kuten tämänkin tutkimuksen perusteella vaikuttaa, sillä voi olla vaikutuksia siihen, miten rehtorit pystyvät huolehtimaan myös muista tärkeistä työhön kuuluvista ulottuvuuksista, kuten arvoista.

Avainsanat: arvojohtajuus, arvot, arvotyöskentely, hallinto, jaettu johtajuus, muutosjohtajuus, rehtori

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Master thesis, 82 pages, 1 appendix

May 2020

Finnish primary school principals can be described as value-based leaders as there are many values that should be implemented in schools from the perspective of the legislation and the core curriculum alone. It has been estimated that the principals' job description is going towards a more holistic direction where it is difficult to define what is *not* a part of principals' duties anymore. This study's aim was to research how the principals view values and value-based leadership in relation to their profession as principals.

The theoretical framework of this research portrayed values and leadership in the context of education. As leaders, principals can influence the value planning, defining, implementation, and visibility processes in their schools. The values should be decided upon communally, they should be defined clearly, and the leader should get the personnel of the organisation behind the values. In best case scenarios the personnel take the values as their own, being proud to represent the chosen values in their work. However, sometimes certain realities such as time and resources can create challenges when implementing values. Naming values alone can be difficult not to mention defining them or putting them to practice.

This research's methodological approach is a qualitative case study with qualitative content analysis method. When interviewed all the principals deemed values important and present in their schools. However, the extent to which value work had been done in the schools varied quite a bit. All principals named values important for themselves personally and professionally, as well as values that arose from the school's cultures. Although values were present in all the schools the principals had challenges concretising the values in order to implement them in the school's cultures. Sometimes values were also taken granted, or seen as obvious, and the obviousness was explained through the school's hidden curriculum. Not all schools had planned the values as a community, but the values were either given to them by their employer (e.g. the city), or the values existed in the school due to other factors, such as environmental. Value work was also seen as important, and the principals brought up the wish to have more time for value discussions. If the principals' job description is shifting more towards management, as this research also suggests, it might have consequences on how the principals acknowledge other important dimensions of their profession such as values.

Keywords: distributed leadership, management, principal, value-based leadership, values, value work

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1 Introduction

The profession of a school principal can be very versatile, and it can vary from school to school. Variables such as the society, school as an organization, goals, resources, cultures, finances and other, force principals to adapt to ever-changing situations in the world of education (Mustonen, 2000). Principals are required to know enough about their own municipality, and also the educational trends that can be applied nation-wide. They should be able to allocate resources in their schools, and determine how learning is evaluated and measured. (Vuohijoki, 2000.) A principal is also an expert in leading human resources that requires good interpersonal skills. In order to navigate all these different fields principals have to have a lot of knowledge and motivation to survive their day-to-day responsibilities. These different roles might bring up conflicts as a principal is both an employer and an employee, and they have the role of a pedagogical, administrative, and strategic leaders. (Vuohijoki, 2000.)

In Finland, the qualification requirements for primary school principals include having a classroom teacher's degree (Lahtero, Ahtiainen, & Lång, 2019), and an educational administration degree of 25 ECTS or 15 ECTS depending on when the degree has been completed (Opetushallitus, 2020). On top of having the degrees in education a principal should also have an appropriate amount of work experience in the field (Alava, 2000). According to a general definition leadership is primarily a coordination of actions, and controlling and sharing responsibilities to the organization's members so that they can use their individual, and organizational resources in order to accomplish the set goals by the organization (Ojala, 2000).

I conducted my Bachelor's thesis on non-binary children in the Finnish primary school which made me ponder upon the importance of equality as a value in schools. Values are defined as *"the moral principles and beliefs or accepted standards of a person or a social group."* (Collins Dictionary, n.d.). If ethics can tell us what is good or bad, and morals can tell us what is right and wrong, values represent the ethics in an organization. The organization's norms, or the set ways of behaving should be in line with the organization's value basis (Kauppinen, 2002). Equality was the focus of my Bachelor's thesis but in my Master's thesis I wanted to research how Finnish primary school principals view values important to themselves, and values they should implement according to the core curriculum. I am conducting the research based on the assumption that all Finnish primary school principals are value-based leaders, as they are obliged to implement at least the values mentioned in the core curriculum to the school cultures,

if not values of their own. Values-based leadership (here forth referred as VBL) is a form of leadership where values set the basis of operation in the organisation (Kauppinen, 2002). This thesis will also look at different leadership theories in relation to VBL in an educational context, and offer a more profound analysis on VBL.

We have multiple compulsory values mentioned in the core curriculum which should be pursued in the school environment. In the national core curriculum for basic education the values have been divided into four separate categories: the uniqueness of the pupil and the right to good education (1), humanity, civilization, equality, and democracy (2), cultural diversity as an asset (3), and the necessity of a sustainable way of life (4). (Opetushallitus, 2014; Tervasmäki, 2016). A principal can affect the school's values and their implementation process.

The legislator has provided a legal framework for the principals to work with, but the majority of principals construct the frames of their responsibilities themselves (Pokka, 2015). One school can be very much environmentally conscious, and another school has implemented democracy in everything they do. Both of these values are mentioned in the core curriculum, and the principal has a central role in managing the values and their visibility in the daily practices of the school, teachers, and students. Principals educate their students with their mere presence and attitude in the school – by being present they let their students know that their role in the school is not solely based on being the highest authority, but also to be a part of the daily events of the whole school community. (Pokka, 2015.)

In order to implement values in the schools' cultures one has to define the values first, and then think of strategies of how to make the values visible in the organization. According to Kauppinen's study about organizational values (2001) 88 % of the Finnish organizations have defined their values instead of just stating them. The study found that when the organization had only stated their values they left space for interpretation, and the values had not been throughoutly implemented. He explains that this is why defining values seems like a necessary evil to do for some organizations instead of making the values a basis of the organization's strategies. (Kauppinen, 2002.) The Finnish core curriculum has set its values through which the whole core curriculum is based on. Furthermore, they have defined the values, and referenced to United Nations' Convention on the Rights of a Child (1991), and United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) as to justify the values and their importance (Opetushallitus, 2014). However, the freedom of interpretation still remains, and there's a lot of responsibility on the schools and their personnel to implement the values as they see fit.

A school is always a community of values, and the values' functions are determined by the legislation as well as the curricula. The values we have in the core curriculum represent the society we currently live in. Principals must recognize the multitude of values, and make sure that the school specific values do not compromise the values set by the core curriculum. The importance of values can be seen in other organizations as well – common rules, justice, trust, and equality are all signs of a good workplace community, and are thus more general values that can be applied to other organizations too, not merely schools. The shared values of a school community means verbalizing and actualizing the things the principal, teachers, and students all consider valuable. In other words the principal's role is to bring forth these values actively instead of passively passing on values that have come as instructions from above. (Pokka, 2015.) This is why I want to research principals and their views on values and leadership as it is mandatory to follow at least the values mentioned in the core curriculum.

I am assuming that there will be differences in how the values are interpreted, and how they are carried out – based on the principals' own values some values might be emphasized more in the school's cultures than others. I want to perceive the values the principals want to implement, and how they have managed to do so, if they have. Additionally, I will have a look at principals as value-based leaders, and how they have implemented values to their leading, if they have. Furthermore, it is interesting to see do the values the principals deem important come from the core curriculum, or from the principals' own ethos. I will reflect the implementation of values to VBL's Vision into Action -model (Kauppinen, 2002), which is a step-by-step model on how to implement values into practice in organizations. I will discuss my results, and lastly offer some further research ideas based on my research.

In value-based leadership stating the values can be very inefficient if the values have not been defined. Finnish principals are inevitably bound by the legislation and the core curriculum which has a set of values all schools should abide. Therefore, I came up with the following research question:

1. How do principals conceptualize value-based leadership?

With this question I want to research how Finnish primary school principals conceptualize value-based leadership, or in other words how they view the connection between values and leadership. I want to research their own value base and compare it to the core curriculum's

value base. My assumption is that at least the values mentioned in the core curriculum will be apparent in the principals' interviews. The principals' own values might also influence the way they deem some of the core curriculum's values' importance.

This is a qualitative case study research with a content analysis methodology. I have interviewed five Finnish primary school principals on how they see themselves as leaders, focusing on values. Finnish principals and values have been previously researched but the two have not been necessarily linked before. I am also interested in seeing how an organizational model of VBL works in a school context, a school being a public organization. This is in other words my research gap. There has not been much research on value-based leadership in a school context although there is some research conducted on pedagogical leadership or principals as leaders. Kyllönen (2011) has researched school leadership and different scenarios how the leadership could change in 2020's in the Finnish context. Kyllönen's research specifically looked at the shifts leadership could have, and the directions towards which education could be developed in the future. When discussing leadership in a Finnish context school leadership has been researched by Juuti (2000), Pokka (2015), and Pennanen (2000) to name a few. Juuti (2000) has looked at principal's through leadership's point of view, rather than management's, Pokka (2015) gives a throughout description of Finnish school leadership and management, and Pennanen (2000) gives insights to leading school in a world which is constantly changing. I will try to give more insight into values and leadership in a school context, and offer possible future topics to research in the frames of values and leadership.

2 Leadership in educational context

By leadership one can mean influencing others' actions in order to achieve wanted results. Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations, and eventually actions of others. (Cuban, 1988.) As mentioned before, principals' roles can be very versatile, and on top of having a leadership role principals also have managerial duties. Management or managing can be defined as maintaining efficiently and effectively the current organizational arrangements. Thus educational management is a field and practice concerned with the operation of educational contexts. Managers can also possess skills which leaders enhold, but management focuses on maintenance of practices rather than change. (Cuban, 1988.) Bolam (1999) defines educational management as an executive function which's purpose is to carry out agreed policy. (Bolam, 1999). When discussing about the differences between leadership and management it is important to look at the setting in which both are applied. Managerial approach fits in situations where the surroundings or their professions do not change rapidly. If there are fast-pacing changes leadership is the more appropriate approach. Leadership approaches are more applicable than managerial approaches to school environment as education can have fast-pacing changes. (Juuti, 2000.) According to Hickman (1990) an organization should find a good balance between management and leadership. He argues that the best compromise happens when the person in charge has the mind of a manager, and the soul of a leader. This means that a person in charge should be able to think in managerial ways, taking care of the daily operations of the organization, and yet maintain the visions and goals as the leader of the organization, guiding it forward. (Hickman, 1990.)

When we discuss leadership in an educational context one of the most common term is pedagogical leadership or educational leadership. In my research I have decided to use the term pedagogical leadership when referring to leadership in an educational context. Pedagogical leadership is a versatile concept which can be perceived as a communal phenomenon within an organization (Fonsén, 2014). If pedagogy is the "*study and theory of the methods and principles of teaching*" (Collins Dictionary, n.d.) pedagogical leadership is the local and national leadership of the educational contents of the core curriculum as well as qualitative development of the matter (Ojala, 2000). As pedagogical leaders principals are thus responsible in overseeing the learning and assessment processes in their schools. Schools are environments of socialization, growth, and development, as they have been purposefully developed for teaching and upbringing. In Finland the education system emphasizes growing into humanity as an

ethical member of the society, getting the necessary knowledge and tools from the system in order to be able to function and develop our society further. Teaching should therefore reflect that, and promote these cultures as well as societal equality, so that people going through our education system will have the tools for lifelong learning. (Mustonen, 2000.) When school leadership is looked at on a general level there is a clear connection between good leadership and school's results. Leadership affects directly to which kind of learning or working environment the school will develop into. Leadership also has a role in setting the working atmosphere as well as the working cultures which affect people's work motivation as a whole. Therefore, in the end when a school has good leadership its influence can be seen in the society's level of knowledge and skills. (Juuti, 2000.)

Pedagogical leadership can be divided amongst other school personnel as well such as different teams, vice-principal, and school administration (Helakorpi, 2001). According to Tukiainen (1999) good pedagogical leadership includes the continuous development of teaching, observing the staff in their activities, guidance and support, organizing the school day, and cooperation with parents as well as the municipality and other governmental officials (Tukiainen, 1999). In Finland, principals are first and foremost teachers with a university degree in education. However, the role of the principal has changed since the first regulated school institutions were established (as further discussed in Chapter 2.1). Although the pedagogical leadership and teaching of the school can be considered intertwined, school leadership and management are nowadays more separated from teaching – some schools have significantly diminished the principal's teaching hours, and some have nullified them completely. Further changes in the society have accelerated the development so that practical management is a more central part of a principal's work. (Alava, 2000.) According to a report by the Ministry of Education of Culture (2013) the importance of pedagogical leadership was to become more imminent in the future (Opetushallitus, 2013). As the education system has faced cuts in finances and human resources, managerial duties have been brought to the centre of school leadership and management. The challenges that the changes bring upon principals are enormous as very few principals have received sufficient competence or additional education in finance or contract law. At the same time the support principals have received from education providers such as the municipality has decreased, and principals are left with the personal responsibility for more and more decision making. (Pokka, 2015.)

In the following chapters I will briefly discuss the changes principal's role has encountered throughout the years in Finland, and then assess different leadership theories which are

applicable in a school setting. Lastly, I will go through the characteristics of VBL, and bind its processes to the world of education.

2.1 Finnish principals' role throughout history

In the same way the society is ever-changing the school system is alike as schools are a reflection of the society. In Finland the school leader's duties have been defined by the legislation, and other settings. In this chapter I will reflect upon how a principal's role has changed throughout the years, and how their role is defined today. It is relevant regarding the research as the new core curriculum gives a new value base for education, and principals are nowadays the people who have a central role in the implementation process of values. This chapter also provides some insights to why our school system's value base has changed the way it has.

In the end of 1800's there was a rise in a national educational policy which was strengthened with strong nationalistic and civic ideologies. Finland was at the end of its autonomy, but the nationalistic movement created its own ideology around educational policies. Previously education was mostly organised by the church, and it served the churches' purposes. Now the responsibility of organizing education was shifted more to the state and government, and they wanted the educational policies to serve the state's needs instead. (Lampinen, 2003.) Thus, the 1866 regulation for school institutions (= *kansakoulu*) was announced – schools were to be built and education was to take place all around Finland. The six-year school programme was meant to civilize and share basic knowledge among Finns, and they were to be established by the municipalities. This was a big shift towards more equal education system as now the education had to be available in Finnish instead of most of the education being organized in Swedish. Before the set school institutions there were rotating teachers going from village to village, organizing teaching in the churches or other accessible buildings. (Tiimi Akatemia, 2018.)

During these first school institutions it was announced that every school should have a leader which was chosen amongst the school's teachers for four years at a time. Up until 1930's and 1940's the school's leader wasn't a supervisor per se, but the responsibility of supervision was taken upon the school boards. The leader's position was more managerial. After World War II many more schools were built to both rural areas as well as cities. As the baby boomers entered the school system, schools became very crowded, and it shifted the leaders' job descriptions to more administrative direction. In 1960's the schools' leaders got more consistency in their

job efforts as they could now be elected for their positions until further notice. The leader's position became a position of trust. (Mustonen, 2000.)

In 1960's there was a shift in Finland's educational policies which were the first steps in establishing the Finnish primary school system. One of the primary school's most important aspects was securing equality. As providing education was supposed to be the same all around Finland, the school administration was shaped with strict rules and new norms. (Mustonen, 2000.) In 1968 Finland decided to move to a comprehensive school system which was said to be the biggest shift in education since education was made compulsory in 1921. The aim of the change was to make education more available for all, and diminish the influence people's background or location had on their educational possibilities. When explaining the astounding PISA-results of 2000 or the Finnish education system's levels of equality these changes are often brought up as they are seen as an enabling factor for PISA success. (Pekkarinen & Uusitalo, 2012.) Although there weren't many official changes to the work description of a school's leader from the first school institutions to comprehensive school there were many changes in practice. Municipal school boards were replaced with school councils and school-specific boards. Leaders' power was still quite insignificant, and they did not have much power to influence. It could be argued that the managerial or administrative features of the profession were furthermore emphasized. The principals got orders from above, and had to oversee the implementation of the new comprehensive school system in action. (Mustonen, 2000.)

In 1983 and 1984 the new comprehensive school acts brought leadership studies as a compulsory new requirement in principals' positions. Further on in 1991 and 1992 the education legislation was dismantled in a way which increased freedom in schools. The power moved from central government to the counties and municipalities. This increased the municipalities' power to define themselves how a school should be led. From here on forth the school administration could take more influence from the municipality's own administration, making their action plans more coherent. However, this also meant that school leaders had very different work descriptions throughout Finland. In 1993 the state subsidy system further increased the municipal and educational power of individual institutions. As there was more cooperation between the municipality and the schools, social skills were now emphasized in the work of a principal. (Mustonen, 2000.)

In 1998 the legislation changed again, and the acts presented in the legislation were yet again diminished. This represented the shift in educational ideologies in the 1990's where power was

delegated, flexibility was increased, optionality was emphasized, and individuality was praised. The most distinguished change between the old and new legislation was that the old legislation defined everything a school should include, and how it should be operated. From leadership's point of view the old legislation was clearer as it had defined the principal's job description in detail. The new legislation defined the aims and contents of education, the different school levels, and the students' rights and responsibilities, instead of trying to affect the schools' operations in detail anymore. This emphasized the versatility of a principal's job description throughout Finland. There are municipalities where the principal's duty is to take care of the school's finances when it comes to purchases in materials and equipment. On the opposite, there are municipalities where the budget the principal is responsible of includes the finances of the whole school, including the staff's salary. (Mustonen, 2000.)

Nowadays the principals' work descriptions vary even more. According to The Ministry of Education and Culture's release (2013) the principal's profession was to become more versatile in the future. This is due to the local government reform, changes in the school buildings and group sizes, the digitalization of learning environments, the implementation of core curriculum of 2014, and the need of cooperation in multi-professional work communities. (Kankainen, 2018.) In Kankainen's article a Finnish normal school principal Tapio Lahtero estimates that principals' job is going towards more holistic direction. He calls it the challenge of infinity – it is more difficult to say what is *not* a principal's responsibility in a school anymore. In order to be able to manage their jobs, principals have to be able to prioritize their tasks in a way that makes sense in pedagogical leadership. This also emphasizes the skill of lifelong learning among principals – one has to be ready to get additional education in order to stay up to date with the new education challenges in our system. (Kankainen, 2018.) Lifelong learning has been one of the key principles of the Finnish education system for 50 years now (Lampinen, 2003).

2.2 Leadership theories

As I am focusing on value-based leadership in the context of education I will first elaborate on other leadership theories which are applicable to schools as public organizations. To understand the special characteristics of VBL it is important to discuss other leadership theories as well. This will also give an insight to how the different leadership theories somewhat overlap. Then

I will discuss VBL in the context of education and introduce it in the frames of this research, and lastly I will offer some comparison between VBL, and the other chosen leadership theories.

Bush (2011) has discussed six different perspectives to educational management in his book *“Theories of Educational Leadership and Management.”* The perspectives have been analyzed in terms of the assumptions made about the goals of educational institutions, the nature of organizational structure, and in relation with the external environment. These six managerial approaches are then linked to ten leadership theories, providing a comparative analysis of the models. (Bush, 2011.) The ten models have been adapted from Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999), and Bush and Glover (2002), and they have collectively suggested that concepts such as school leadership are complex and diverse. The ten models are as follows:

1. Managerial leadership
2. Instructional leadership
3. Transformational leadership
4. Participative leadership
5. Distributed leadership
6. Transactional leadership
7. Postmodern leadership
8. Emotional leadership
9. Contingent leadership
10. Moral leadership (Bush, 2011).

However, as some of these leadership theories overlap, and some are not as apparent in the Finnish educational context I will discuss the following leadership theories further:

1. Transformational leadership
2. Distributed leadership
3. Value-based leadership

I justify my choices by referring to the following factors; firstly, the Finnish education system, or education systems in general are always in constant change. The core curriculum is renewed every ten years which means that the education system and its contents are being updated, and the society around schools change constantly – schools following the society. This makes transformational leadership important and inevitably existing in the Finnish education system.

Secondly, some of the models are not apparent in Finnish schools as perhaps elsewhere. Transactional leadership has traits of positive and negative transactions, meaning that the employees are either rewarded or punished for their actions. (Burns, Goethals & Sorenson, 2004). Elsewhere a principal could offer inducements, such as a promotion or a discretionary salary increments (Bush, 2011) but in the Finnish setting principals do not necessarily have that power. Contingency theories on the other hand focus on the relative effectiveness of a leader's behavior, leading styles, or leading orientations depending on the situation. According to different contingency theories a leader will adjust their leading techniques and goals depending on the situation at hand. (Burns, Goethals & Sorenson, 2004). As many leadership theories overlap, the contingency theories are quite vague to this research's purposes, and the idea of changing leadership behavior and strategies due to changing factors is included in other theories as well. Thus, contingent leadership is not a single model, but it represents the selection of the most appropriate leading style for the situation (Bush, 2011).

Thirdly, distributed leadership is the current trend in Finnish schools which is why I have decided to look into it further. Principals have many varying duties, and distributed leadership is a way of addressing different tasks to different people instead of making only one person handle it all. (Lahtero, Ahtiainen & Lång, 2019). Distributed leadership is also very versatile, and the ways it can be implemented in a school are various.

Fourthly, value-based leadership can also be linked to other leadership theories such as moral leadership and emotional leadership but as VBL was not included as it is in the model provided by Bush (2011) I will look into it through the lens of education. In other words, moral leadership and emotional leadership have features of VBL which is why I have decided not to discuss them specifically but include some of their characteristics to discussions related to VBL.

And lastly, I have to narrow down the options in general. The three leadership theories I have chosen are different in their definitions, and yet values play a central role in all these theories in Finnish context. They were all also apparent in the participants' discussions, and after analysing the data having these three leadership theories seemed justified. I have already discussed managerial approach to leadership in Chapter 2. I also aim at discussing the similarities to find similarities of these leadership theories to VBL – VBL is my main focus, but transformational and distributed leadership can have similar features as VBL. Therefore, I will now further discuss transformational leadership, distributed leadership, and value-based leadership in an educational context, and give more insight to these theories.

2.2.1 Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership as a term was first coined by Downton (1973). As its name indicates transformational leadership is a process that changes or transforms people. It concerns people's emotions, ethics, values, standards, and long-term goals. (Northouse, 2016.) Transformational leadership is sometimes also called the leadership of change. Transformational leaders engage their employees and other people by being morally uplifting in order to achieve something of significance. They have a vision, and they are more concerned of with the collective interest of the group such as school as opposed to their own interests. (Avolio, 2004.) According to an industrial psychologist Bernard Bass (1985) the initial components of transformational leadership include individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and charismatic, or inspiring leadership. He also added that in order to be a transformational leader one needs to know the needs, abilities, and aspirations of the people one works with. When the leaders know their followers, they know how to transform their thinking towards their vision and eventually change their thinking accordingly. (Bass, 1985.) When the employees see the sacrifices the leader makes in order to achieve the change, on top of the leader painting a new vision of how things will look after the changes have come to an effect, they are more compelled to follow the leader's vision (Avolio, 2004). Thus, under transformational leadership the members of the community come to question their assumptions and those of others, and ideally arrive at new perspectives (Allison-Napolitano, 2013). This enables change in the organization.

In the context of education transformational leadership has surfaced as it has an emphasis on a vision as the central dimension of leadership (Bush, 2011). Leithwood (1994) also argues that transformational leadership is effective in improving student outcomes (Leithwood, 1994). As mentioned before, good leadership of a school has direct consequences on the school's results (Juuti, 2000). According to Fullan (1998) schools need transformational leadership in order to get rid of the independent variables outside of the school context (Fullan, 1998). Pennanen (2000) adds that according to his research on leadership in schools in modern, postmodern, and transmodern times, pedagogical leadership together with transformational leadership were derived as current issues in the world of education. The process of change in the education system has been reflected on leadership and its emphasis. There have been new legislations from the government regarding changes, and the schools have tried to respond accordingly. According to the municipal leaders of principals, a principal's efforts are central when working with changes in the education system. Pennanen (2000) found out in his research that 63 % of

principals thought that their chances in developing their leadership skills in general were better than before. Principals saw changes in a positive manner when looking at them longitudinally. (Pennanen, 2000.)

Nowadays there has been an increase in local authority and decrease in regional control. This means that a principal has more power in the development of education policies in Finland. (Pokka, 2015.) Fullan (2001) has proposed the following framework for leadership when working with culture of change:



Figure 1: A framework for leadership for principals as agents of change (Fullan, 2002).

Fullan has divided transformational leadership’s main contents into five. Firstly, there is moral purpose. As leaders principals should create a meaning for their jobs, and their employee’s jobs, in order to make the employees more motivated to work towards common goals. As a school’s goal is to affect their students’ results, the strategies which are taken should follow the aims. The principal should also aim for a systemic change meaning that one should take into consideration other schools in the district as well. Sustained improvement of schools is not possible unless the whole system is moving forward. (Fullan, 2002.)

Secondly, the leader must have an understanding of change. Change processes can be complex, and they can take a lot of time. It is important for the principal to understand these processes, and to be able to implement them into their strategies. (Fullan, 2002.)

Thirdly, Fullan found that one of the most important enablers of change is improving relationships. The basic idea is that when relationships improve, things eventually get better. It is important for leaders to build relationships especially with people different from them. Building relationships is also important when building teams within the organization. Good relationships lay a good foundation for the work of change for years to come. (Fullan, 2002.)

Fourthly, Fullan focuses on knowledge creation and sharing. When an organization fosters a culture of both knowledge seeking and knowledge sharing, it can foster transformational leadership. Schools endorse lifelong learning but it is very difficult to do so unless knowledge is shared amongst individuals. (Fullan, 2002.)

Lastly, the framework includes working on connectedness and / or coherence-making. Briefly explained coherence-making occurs when a principal is able to prioritize one's tasks, and focus on the things that matter most – such as the student body's achievements. However, as the world we live in is very hectic Fullan argues that coherence cannot ever be fully achieved. It is up to the principals as leaders to navigate through problems, and prioritize their tasks so that they get the best results. (Fullan, 2007, Fullan, 2002.)

All in all, Fullan wants to argue with his framework that principals are not only instructional leaders but leaders in a culture of change. We should raise our sights and focus on the associated conditions that will enable change in a larger scale. This should be done with a sustainable basis including the transformation of the teaching profession. As effective change happens on a larger scale there must be efforts at the levels of school, communities, districts, and the level of the state. (Fullan, 2002.)

2.2.2 Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership is also known as dispersed or shared leadership (Gronn, 2004). The term distributed leadership was first coined by Gibb (1954) when he articulated the possibility of distributing leadership amongst multiple people. The leadership style had been exceptional for a long time meaning leadership was the monopoly of individual position-holders or maximum a handful of skillful actors in an organization. In other words, exceptional leadership is focused

leadership where leadership skills were seen more as innate features of a person. Exceptional leadership also had the features of a leader-follower or superior-subordinate binaries, but distributed leadership challenges the idea of hierarchies, and offers an expanded view on how organization can and should be taken forward. (Gronn, 2004.)

There are many different forms and variations of distributed leadership. In its simplest form it means that every member of the organization is meaningful, and can offer new insights when it comes to leadership, and influencing the community. (Gronn, 2004; Yukl, 1999.) This makes distributed leadership widely democratic as more members of the organization have a say in how the organization should be taken forward. Democratic leadership is also referred as participative leadership, and its methods overlap with distributed leadership vastly. The aim of democratic leadership is to create an environment where people can perform as active contributors to the creation of the institutions or organisations, their relationships, and their culture (Woods, 2005) much like distributed leadership does. Bush (1995) found that when a school supports democratic leadership models the quality of decision-making increases. The study also found that principals often had the misconception that teachers did not want to be included in the decision-making processes. (Vulkko, 2000; Bush 1995.) Participative leadership is based on the idea where people are developing themselves and their expertise through learning. Thus, having clear and concrete developmental aims based on a quality vision enables the members of the organization to develop themselves further. When quality and expertise are singled out as central figures which steer the organization the goals can be achieved through values and the school's culture. (Ojala, 2000.) As we see from the cases of distributed leadership, democratic leadership, and participative leadership, the leadership theories do not rule each other out but they focus on different theoretical aspects of leadership dimensions (Ahtiainen, Lahtero & Lång, 2019.) A second form, or more complicated form of distributed leadership is a conjoint leadership model where members blend or fuse their plans and ideas as if they have a "shared mind". This form of distributed leadership often appears quite spontaneously amongst people who get along well. Thus, the leadership is shared as the people figure out they have similar thought processes and they have interests in common. (Gronn, 2004.)

In the context of education distributed leadership and the ways it has been implemented vary vastly as well. The field of school leadership has many dimensions, and the tasks of a principal are various. Distributed leadership in schools has been justified by the ever-growing work description of a principal, and it has been offered as one of the solutions to the responsibilities

of the job. (Ahtiainen, Lahtero & Lång, 2019.) Leithwood et al.'s (2008) study of the impact of school leadership led to an evidence-based claim that when leadership is widely distributed in a school it has a greater influence on the school and its students (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; Bush 2011). Distributed leadership has also been mentioned in the public Finnish educational policy talks as an absolute condition in the implementation of pedagogical leadership in schools (Ahtiainen, Lahtero & Lång, 2019; Opetushallitus, 2013). In schools the leadership is not solely on the shoulders of a principal anymore, but it is shared within many members of the school and the city or municipality. The importance of distributed leadership has been underlined in bigger school units with a big student body. (Ahtiainen, Lahtero & Lång, 2019.)

According to Fonsén (2014) the first step towards distributed leadership is distributing or delegating individual tasks to other personnel within the organization (Fonsén, 2014; Ahtiainen, Lahtero & Lång, 2019). This has been the way leadership has been mostly distributed in Finnish schools. Delegating tasks is a way of other personnel having a say in leadership decisions at least in cases where the delegatee has sufficient level of knowledge in the matter they are processing. Delegating tasks also becomes more efficient when the person or personnel are there to put the new task or model into practice. In a school setting the principal can focus on more important or complex tasks at hand by delegating duties to other. The risk with handling distributed leadership only through delegating tasks is that the distribution is left on a shallow stage, and the employees are merely dealing with matters that are handed to them by an upper level or authority. (Ahtiainen, Lahtero & Lång, 2019.)

In the Finnish society distributed leadership in schools arose from the fact that the workload of principals was simply too big for one person to cope with. Thus, distributed leadership has occurred in Finnish schools through practical issues not as a result of educational research or directions from education leaders. The way distributed leadership can be seen in practice in Finnish schools is mostly in the actions of a vice principal. A skilled vice principal is vital for the school's leadership and management. On top of sharing work tasks the principal and the vice principal can share an across-the-board perspective of the school, keeping the school in track in achieving the school's set goals. (Pokka, 2015.)

In pedagogical leadership some leadership tasks will always be the formal responsibilities of a principal. However, at its best distributed leadership activates teachers as agents in the organization, and the delegation of tasks can become dynamic interaction between the principal

and the school personnel, such as teachers. In cases like this distributed leadership becomes visible not only with delegating tasks, but through people's unofficial or behind-the-scenes relationships. Leadership becomes more apparent in the interaction between principal and teacher than the sole actions of the principal. (Ahtiainen, Lahtero & Lång, 2019.) After all, leadership means leading people, and leading people should be democratic and participative. When leadership is underlined as relationships between people good leadership can occur when people cooperate, and jointly work towards common goals together. According to Juuti good distributed leadership can be achieved not by commands nor forcing, but with heart. (Juuti, 2000.)

According to a study by Ahtiainen, Lahtero and Lång (2019) they found that distributed leadership was absolutely necessary in school leadership. The principals who participated in the study justified distributed leadership as means of motivating and including teachers as the teachers could have more influence in their jobs. (Ahtiainen, Lahtero & Lång, 2019.) Distributed leadership goes also in line with the new core curriculum of 2014 (Opetushallitus, 2014). The principals' educational background seemed to influence the way they viewed distributed leadership. Those who had received education in leadership and administration studies (25 ECTS) valued distributed leadership more than those who had not studied leadership before. (Ahtiainen, Lahtero & Lång, 2019.) According to Pokka (2015) distributed leadership or team leadership can also have a direct effect into principals' wellbeing. The workplace wellbeing of a principal has a direct effect into the welfare of the whole school community. If the school does not have distributed leadership principals can look for support from their peers and colleagues in other schools. The collegial support of other principals is an essential part of the development of one's wellbeing at work. Thus, principals can pursue school development through different means of collaboration. (Pokka, 2015.)

So far we have observed distributed leadership as an interaction between principal and teachers, or other school personnel, but distributed leadership can also mean bringing students into the planning and decision-making processes. The students can bring a unique point of view into decision-making, and also the legislation states that students should have a say in matter which influence their schoolwork significantly. When the students are included in the decision-making processes it also builds a culture of trust between the student body and the school personnel. If the students are not included directly by the principal they can be included by the teacher who is the leader of the classroom. Teacher is always the leader of a group students, and therefore leadership and management skills are an important part of teacherhood in addition to

pedagogical professionalism. (Pokka, 2015.) Distributing decision-making to students also goes with the values the core curriculum presents. Democracy being one of the values the students can also have a say in decision-making in the form of a student council for example. The school system is supposed to produce citizens who can, and know how to influence. The students should have a say in how their education is conducted, and even what topics they want to learn. The school can be one of the first environments where the students get to practice their influencing skills in action. Actions can be small such as making changes to one's own behavior, but they can also be bigger such as contacting municipality or government officials, and offering creative or alternative ways of solving problems. (Raskulla, 2017.)

2.2.3 Value-based leadership

Values are the ethical manifesto of an organization. Values message what kind of things the organization believes in. I will look further into values in Chapter 3. Value-based leadership's definitions vary as it has many implications in organizational world and in the world of education separately. O'Toole (2008) has tried to offer a singular definition of VBL. He discusses value-based leaders as people who help their followers realize the most important ends they hold dear, but cannot obtain by themselves (O'Toole, 2008). VBL begins in choosing values the organization wants to take further, and defining what the values mean in action. VBL is made possible when the values' potential is recognized, the importance of a strong value-base is agreed upon, and the role of leadership is acknowledged. (Kauppinen, 2002.) In recent years leadership researches have described values as a key component of effective leadership. It has also been seen as an essential trait for a leader to possess. The discussion revolves around a common theme which states that leaders should possess a strong foundation of personal values, principles, or ethics. Another thought links the leader's own ethics to the organization's values and claims that the two should go hand-in-hand, eventually being passed on to other members of the organization. (Graber & Kilpatrick, 2008.)

According to Kauppinen (2002) an organizational leader has two main tasks. Firstly, the leader must create a good basis for success for the organization. Secondly, the leader must be able to direct the organization in a direction which enables the organization to make use of the opportunities that come across for the benefit of the organization's success. The first task is also known as a strategy, and the second task is also known as the operative stage. In other words, a successful leader in VBL must choose the values and define them, must lead the organization

strategically, must anchor the values into the core of the organization, and must make sure that the values are followed in action. When the values are implemented to an organization they become the new norms of the organizational culture, and at their best the employees of the organization take the values as their own by embedding the values into their individual daily actions. (Kauppinen, 2002.)

VBL is the main focus area of this research. It has been researched in educational context before, but not so widely in the Finnish context. Kraemer (2011) has researched values in an organization suggesting four principles of value-based leadership: self-reflection, balance and perspective, true self-confidence, and genuine humility. According to him by embracing these principles a leader will learn how to lead and influence people whether or not the people report directly to the leader. He argues that leadership is not about the leader, but about the positive growth and change a leader can bring to an organization. (Kraemer, 2011.) Hendrikz and Engelbrecht (2019) researched VBL in the context of South Africa. Their aim was to create a measure of a principled leadership scale (PLS) by integrating value-based behaviours inherent in transformational, servant, authentic, and ethical leadership. They were motivated by the idea that VBL is closely aligned with universal moral values. They used these forementioned four VBL theories for the first time under one construct, and they were able to create a potential psychometrically sound instrument to measure principled leadership. (Hendrikz & Engelbrecht, 2019.) Nuri Baloğlu (2012) has researched VBL in correspondence with distributed leadership. He looked at the relationship of VBL and distributed leadership behaviors of school principals through the views of primary school teachers. The results indicated that distributed leadership was a result of VBL in a school community. (Baloğlu, 2012.) As we can already see from Hendrikz and Engelbrecht's research the concept of VBL is intertwined with other leadership theories, such as ethical leadership, transformative leadership, democratic leadership, or distributed leadership.

In the Finnish organizational setting Kauppinen (2002) has created a Vision into Action (VIA) -model which goes from a vision into actions on an individual level through strategic and operative stages. This model has been a way of depicting and linking VBL into leadership theories as a whole. Based on the VBL theory and VIA-model, Kauppinen has offered a way of implementing values into action in an organization. The implementation model is further discussed in Figure 2.

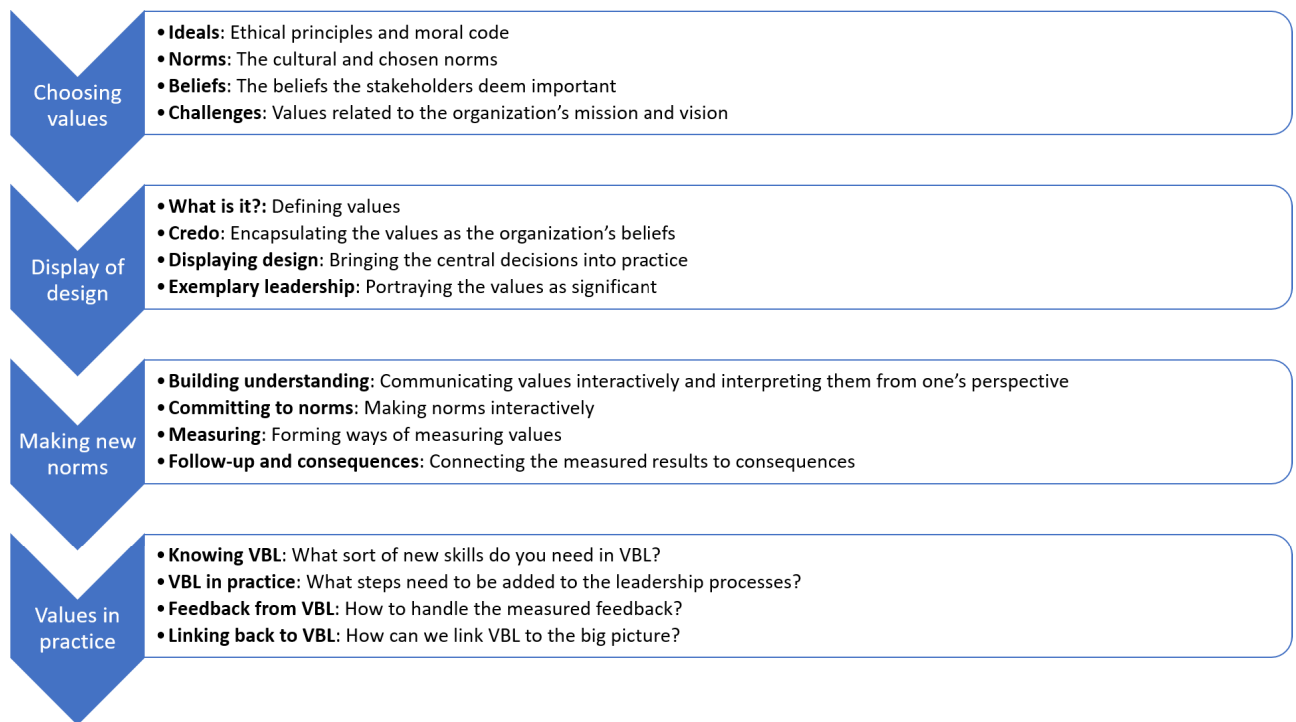


Figure 2: Implementing VBL into practice; four levels of leadership, and the steps in each level. Paraphrased from Tero Kauppinen's model (2002).

The model of VBL is intertwined to Kauppinen's VIA-model. It offers an insight to how values can be implemented and put into action in an organization, and what might be some of the challenges that come across during the implementation process. Firstly, the values are chosen based on the organisation's ideals, norms, and beliefs. Next, the values are defined, and the definition is further linked to the organisation's ideals, norms, and beliefs. Thirdly, the values are introduced as new norms to the organisation with the aim of the personnel understanding the values, and committing to the new norms. Lastly, the values are then put to practice, and their implementation is followed through by the leader, taking also the employees' feedback into consideration. Based on the feedback the implementation process can be further developed. (Kauppinen, 2002.)

Why is VBL an important aspect of leadership in a school setting? Firstly, our society and the school as an institution has set values defined by the core curriculum, and the schools should abide them. These values are further on discussed in Chapter 3, but I have already outlined them in *Introduction*. As the values have been outlined by the core curriculum of 2014 I can assume that every principal is a value-based leader as well since they have to bring the values from the core curriculum into action in the school's own cultures. Secondly, values are important in

everything we do, and the values of an organization should be clear to its leader and its other members (Kauppinen, 2002).

Sahlberg (2000) states that a good leader of a school has an important role when making the school's ethical base. The school's ethical base can have a direct effect into its students' perceptions of the well-being of the world. On top of announcing their values a school should also take a stand against values they are against. In practice this can mean promoting peace instead of violence, or taking a stand for someone who cannot speak for themselves instead of quieting others. As the world is widely globalizing we have the collective responsibility of finding solutions to common problems. The school principal should be aware of these global problems such as the climate change in order to take education to the right direction. When a school is led with a strong value base it can guide education as a whole towards ethical stances, and positive change. (Sahlberg, 2000.)

All the forementioned leadership theories are applicable to schools and principals. They also share many similarities with each other, and as mentioned before they can overlap in certain situations. Features of VBL can be found from both transformational and distributed leadership. Distributing leadership in itself can be an act based on values. Sharing the tasks as well as the knowhow can be a way to portray certain values such as openness or vulnerability by the leaders. Shifting towards more shared leadership can also be a way of acknowledging change in schools – the principal's profession has moved to a more holistic direction, and the work description has expanded. Sharing tasks is taking the change into consideration as one leader might not be able to perform all the tasks in their work. Transformational leadership also links to VBL, and to Kauppinen's (2002) VIA-model. In order to effectively apply change the leader has to get the personnel behind the reasons of change similarly as in Kauppinen's model of implementing values (Kauppinen, 2002). When the personnel understand the reasons or the moral purpose behind change it is easier to implement by the leader (Fullan, 2002). The same applies to implementing values – first, the personnel need to understand the reasons behind the values before they can understand the meaning of the values that are implemented. Implementing new values can be seen as implementing change in a organisation, thus linking transformational leadership and VBL together.

3 Values and Finnish educational context

Values are a complex concept to define. We can approach values in a normative fashion as absolute moral imperatives, and in descriptive manner meaning taking into consideration the meanings individuals impose on them. However, if we endorse values in a comprehensive approach they can be defined as “*the underlying orientations adopted by individuals, the motivating forces behind their choices and actions*” (Bréchon & Gonthier, 2017, p. 2). According to Junnola & Juuti (1997), the theoretical problematics around values includes many questions which are difficult to answer such as:

- What are values?
- What are the defining qualities of values?
- How can you classify values?
- Where do values come from and how are they born?
- Can you place values in a systematic framework?
- What are the most important theoretical connections of values in relation to other constructs such as identity, ideal self, willingness, attitude, role, organization, culture, ideology, and world view? (Junnola & Juuti, 1997).

One of the most often cited definitions of values is by Kluckhohn (1951): Values are “*a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of action*” (Kluckhohn, 1951, p. 395). The important word in this definition is “desirable” as values are not simply people’s desires, but desires people consider justified (Robbins & Sommerschuh, 2016). Kluckhohn also stated that values are often bound to the cultural and societal structures, and they cannot be directly observed, but they are understood through the actions and words of others (Junnola & Juuti, 1997; Kluckhohn 1951). This is supported by Purjo (2014) who states that values are detached from people who want to deem something as valuable, or impose a value upon something. Values should not depend on people, but they should be objective, timeless, and valid through eternity. In this way values stay important even if there is no one to value them or put them into action. (Purjo, 2014.) Davis (2011) defines values as a moral compass to guide one’s thoughts and actions. Values also provide stability during instable times, and they bring likeminded people together. (Davis, 2011; Baloğlu, 2012.) This definition is supported by Kauppinen (2002) who sees values as the ethics of an organization when referring to VBL (Kauppinen, 2002).

In this research I see values as the ethical manifesto of schools which set a value base for the school's work cultures. Next, I will look at the values in the Finnish society, and how those values are reflected to an educational context. Lastly, I will discuss the values found from the core curriculum, and how those values are further implemented to schools.

3.1 Values in the Finnish society

According to the Finnish Government Office good societal values are freedom, democracy, equality, justice, and solidarity. With these values a welfare state should offer its citizens the best possible physical, mental, and social circumstances where everyone has equal possibilities to thrive. This depiction of a welfare state has worked as the basis of the Finnish society's value base. A welfare state should decrease the gap between the poor and the rich, and aim towards the common good. By making the society's common good as a goal it is bound to eventually benefit the individual as well. According to the Finnish Constitution everyone should be granted a basic income in case of unemployment, sickness, and retirement. This is overseen by the social security system. (Valtioneuvoston kanslia, n.d.)

Pellervon taloustutkimus (PTT), a Finnish economic research centre, researched Finnish values in 2018. Safety was the most important value which arose from the results. This was explained as a reflection of the current stage of the world with its crises and instabilities. Next most important values were self-direction and solidarity. The values implicated that Finns deem common good and equality important. According to the study the Finnish value base is quite united with a few exceptions of regional differences. The differences were also explained with variables such as age, life situation, education, and occupation. Also social capital affects the way people value different things. When social capital increases the interest towards common good, and treating everyone equally increases as well. A bigger social capital makes stepping into others' shoes easier. (Mäkilä, 2018.)

3.2 Values in teaching and the core curriculum

According to the Trade Union of Education in Finland (OAJ), there are four basic values which create the core of teaching: dignity, truthfulness, fairness, and responsibility and freedom. They have taken a stance on values from teachers' point of view – according to them, all teaching is based on ethics. They have also defined the values accordingly:

1. Dignity: Respect for humanity. In other words, respecting everyone despite of their ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality, appearance, social standing, opinions, abilities or achievement.
2. Truthfulness: Honesty with oneself and others. Steering learners in navigating life and their environment.
3. Fairness: Promoting equality and non-discrimination – avoiding favoritism. (Trade Union of Education in Finland, n.d.)

Although teachers are allowed to have their own values, their action when working should always be based on the legislation and the curriculum (Trade Union of Education in Finland, n.d.).

Values in an educational context offer an important point of view, as values are embedded in everything we say, think, and do. Education in general promotes and creates values in multiple ways. Even when not done on purpose, values are transmitted to others. When people are educated, they receive necessary knowledge and skills in order to thrive in the society. They also receive values promoted by the education system. Values in education influence how we construct our curriculum and how we present materials in the curriculum. This is why education institutions, teachers, parents, and students must understand how and why some values are taught. (Thomas, n.d.)

The most important tool for pedagogical leadership is the curriculum. A Finnish school is an autonomous operator at its best, but the curriculum provides schools with a common framework and content of instruction. It is the principal's responsibility to oversee that the school organizes their teaching according to the curriculum. (Pokka, 2015.) The core curriculum defines the schools' basic values, shapes the principles that guide school work such as the very concept of learning, the operational cultures, learning environments, and working methods. The curriculum also outlines the objectives and core contents of all teachable subjects together with multidisciplinary themes. (Opetushallitus, 2014; Pokka, 2015.) The core curriculum also works as the basis for local curricula, and further on an individual school curriculum. In this stage the principals have power to shape the core curriculum to fit their own school's needs and goals. As the core curriculum is renewed every ten years it stays up to date to the society's needs and goals as well. (Pokka, 2015.)

As stated before the core curriculum of 2014 has chosen certain values and defined their meanings. The values are the uniqueness of the pupil and the right to good education, humanity,

civilization, equality and democracy, cultural diversity as an asset, and the necessity of a sustainable way of life. (Opetushallitus, 2014; Tervasmäki, 2016.) These values seem to be in line with the Finnish society's values outlined in Chapter 3.1, and with general values in teaching outlined earlier in this chapter. They all underline equality, democracy, cultural diversity as an asset, and the necessity of a sustainable life either directly or indirectly. The contents of the subjects as well as the transversal competences have been built upon this value base. The values can also be seen in the multi-disciplinary themes of the core curriculum especially when discussing school cultures. The key words to efficient school cultures are:

- Learning communities in the core of the school cultures
- Well-being and safety
- Interaction and versatile methods of working
- Cultural diversity and language awareness
- Inclusion and working democratically
- Equality and equity
- Responsibility of our environment, and aiming towards a sustainable future (Veistola, 2015.)

The values have thus been presented and defined by the Ministry of Education and Culture. However, in my research I am keen on finding out whether these values have then been embedded to the schools and their individual cultures based on the principals' perceptions. I also want to research whether the values have been defined, and whether they have been transmitted to the school's cultures – not only stated in the school's own curriculum. On top of this I was interested in interviewing principals about their own value base, and see whether there are connections to the core curriculum's defined values. Lastly, I want to see how the values have been implemented, and possibly whether they have had any effect on the school's cultures.

4 Methodology

This research is a qualitative case study with a content analysis approach as a research method. In the following chapters, I will give more insight to qualitative research, qualitative case study method, and content analysis approach as research methods.

4.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is a versatile research methodology which can be divided into many different sub-categories. Qualitative research focuses on non-numeric data which aims to understand varied societal phenomena. According to Metsämuuronen (2011) it should be noted that although it is as difficult to conduct good qualitative research as it is good quantitative research, conducting bad qualitative research is easier than bad quantitative research, and quantitative methods have many varied ways to control false conclusions. Qualitative research focuses on the researcher's own perceptions, intuition, and categorisation processes which leaves more space for alternative ways of analyzing the data. Qualitative data will also always be bound to certain values as the data is often very subjective. (Metsämuuronen, 2011.) The researcher should also always remember that one is a subjective agent conducting the research, and one's own values and other biases can also affect the research outcome (Haapaniemi, 2013). A different researcher conducting the same research with the same data might have different outcomes and conclusions in the end (Metsämuuronen, 2011).

Qualitative research is an appropriate research method when the researcher wants to perceive the detailed structure of a certain phenomenon rather than how the phenomenon divides in a more general matter. It gives meaning to single individuals' perceptions by combining them, and giving them a meaningful structure in a setting which is tried to keep as natural as possible, not to influence the data gathering. Qualitative research can give information about certain cause and effect phenomena which cannot otherwise be examined through a test. (Metsämuuronen, 2011.)

4.2 Qualitative case study with content analysis approach

All empirical research involves cases. However, in a case study the case is conceptualised differently than in quantitative research for example where the case is considered as a statistical unit. The target in a case study is often a chain of events or a phenomenon. In other words, a

case study researches a small group of cases, or one single case. (Laine, Bamberg & Jokinen, 2015.) A case study can be defined as empirical research which researches a current event or people in a certain event or environment. The aim of a case study is to understand the phenomenon more profoundly. (Metsämuuronen, 2011.) In this research, case refers to principals' views on value-based leadership, and the aim is to get more profound understanding of the meaning of values for leadership.

Qualitative case study methodology provides means to research complex phenomena within their contexts (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Qualitative case study is a central qualitative research method as almost all qualitative research can be considered a case study (Metsämuuronen, 2011). According to Yin (2014) qualitative case study methodology is justified when one wants to consider the contextual features in relation to the phenomenon although the boundaries might not be clear between the phenomenon and the context (Yin, 2014). In this research, the wider context is Finnish primary school elaborated from the perspective of values and leadership. There are many different types of case studies but this research has been conducted with a holistic approach to case studies with a constructivist philosophy of science as opposed to an embedded case study. Themes and assumptions can be presented but they should remain subordinate to the understanding of the case. (Scholz & Tietje, 2001.) The constructivist approach of philosophy of science differs from other philosophies of science by viewing reality as subjective. For a constructivist researcher the reality is constructed from individuals' relative reality, and multiple people might share the same perceptions. The researcher aims at forming the truth by interaction with the researchee, and the findings are formed based on the researcher's own interpretations. In other words constructivist research approach focuses on hermeneutics, or the aim of creating interpretations out of our reality. Constructivist approach can also be described as existential-phenomenological-hermeneutical philosophy. (Metsämuuronen, 2011.) Furthermore, in this research my assumption is that there is no "correct" or "true" way of understanding or implementing value-based leadership, but principals have varied views and ideas related to it.

Cohen and Manion have cited Adelman et. al. (1980) with the possible benefits of a case study. The data of a case study can be considered paradoxically "strongly true", but the data can be difficult to organise. As the data collection is strongly based on the participants' perceptions the evidence gathered from the data cannot be widely generalized. (Cohen & Manion, 1995.) However, it should be acknowledged that the generalisation of the results is not the aim of a qualitative case study. One case does not represent the population or even a niche group as a

whole, but it can provide insight to the population's of a group's behaviour. Case studies focus on the similarities as well as the unique qualities derived from the data. (Metsämuuronen, 2011.) Case studies also take the complexity and overlapping of the social truths into consideration. The results of a case study should be presented in a way which can be understood by academics as well as others since the results are often linked to the original data by quotations for example. (Cohen & Manion, 1995.) The strengths and limitations of a case study method will be further discussed in Chapter 7, *Ethics and reliability*.

The aim of a qualitative content analysis is to research linguistic data where the researcher aims to analyse the researched phenomenon in relation to its context with different content categorisations. In other words a content analysis aims at describing the data systematically, and verbally. The content analysis can be conducted in two ways – either with a data-driven approach, or it can be operationalised through theory. The two different approaches can sometimes also overlap. In data-driven approach all units of importance and categorisations are conducted based on the collected data. When operationalised through theory the theoretical framework already gives some themes or categories, and the data is analysed with the theory in mind. (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, n.d.) In this research both approaches have been applied. There are three big themes; values, leadership, and implementation processes which arise from the theoretical framework. The data has been analysed with these themes in mind, and the third-level categories have been derived from the data. However, there has not been any connections made that have not arisen from the data itself. Thus, both approaches have been used. The categorisation processes have been further explained in Chapter 5.2, *Means of analysis*.

The qualitative content analysis does not occur at the end of the research but it is rather a part of the research's cycle, and the analysis already begins in the data collection phase. The categories derived from the data may change throughout the research and analysis process. The analysis is finished when there are no more new meanings nor views that can be derived from the data. Qualitative research and content analysis are often described as eclectic as there is no universally correct way of creating the categories nor do the created categories necessarily fit another research, and another set of data. The results gathered from the data might also vary depending on who conducting the analysis. (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, n.d.)

The case of this research is formed by five Finnish primary school principals, and their perceptions on value-based leadership. When choosing the case on a qualitative case study it is important to assess where and why the participants are chosen in the study. There are two

different ways of beginning a case study. The researcher can either choose an interesting case, and assess what concepts are appropriate when analysing the case further revealing what the case might enfold. The researcher can also have a clear idea about the target of the research working towards finding an appropriate case to apply the chosen concepts on. (Laine, Bamberg & Jokinen, 2015.) In this research the latter approach has been applied – the primary school principals have been chosen as the case, and the case has been perceived and analysed through the concept of VBL.

5 Conducting the research

5.1 Data collection

In the beginning of the data collection process I first sought out to my own relations to schools and principals meaning that I was firstly looking for interviewees through convenience sampling. Convenience sampling, or sometimes also referred as availability sampling is a method of sampling where the researcher relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available for participating in a study. This sampling method includes getting participants from the most convenient sources to the researcher. (Dudovskiy, 2019.) However, as I recruited a few participants they were able to give me access to other principals who might be able to participate in the study. This is called snowball sampling which is another method of convenience sampling. Snowball sampling is used when the target research group, in this case Finnish primary schools principals are difficult to access. In this method the pre-existing research participants will recruit more participants through their networks. (Naderifar, Goli & Ghaljaei, 2017.) I will further discuss the ethics and reliability of the sampling methods in Chapter 7. The amount of participants in this research is 5 ($n = 5$), and they have been appointed a name of P1-P5, P meaning participant, and the number representing a random number. The job experience of the principals varied from two years to more than 30 years in the field. It should be noted however that I was originally to interview 7 participants, but two interviews were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The schools in Finland were closed 13 March 2020 for an interdetermined time so it is very understandable a research interview might not be the first priority for principals in this unique situation. I conducted only one interview after the school closure which was done distantly through a video chat, and later a phone call.

When collecting the data I decided to use semi-structured interviews in order to have a structure to my interview, but being able to ask the participants to elaborate on some of the answers if the interview so deemed. Semi-structured interviews are well suited when trying to gain data on people's perceptions and opinions. The less-structured frame of the interviews also leaves space for probing more information, or clarification of the answers. (Barriball & While, 1994.) Using an interview as a method to collect the data was quite obvious as collecting the data via a questionnaire or a survey would had not been sufficient enough unless I would have used interviews to back up the data I would have collected in the questionnaires. Two of the

interviews were collected via phone or Skype, and the rest were conducted face-to-face. The interviews were conducted in Finnish which is why the content analysis has been conducted in Finnish. It is better to translate the whole analysis in the end as some meanings or nuances might be lost in the translation process. Now the translation did not affect the content analysis, but it might still affect the way I'm presenting the results. This is something the reader should be aware of as well. The translated interview structure can be found under Chapter 10, *Appendices*.

The interview situations were tried to keep as relaxed as possible having a list of questions at hand, but also having the freedom of asking more or elaborative questions from the participants, if needed. First there were demographic questions which inquired about the principals' background, and the school they currently worked in. The aim of these questions were to softly introduce the situation to the principals, and gradually go to more complex matters. Warming up before the actual questions is important in order for the interviewees to feel more comfortable during the interviews. Next, I asked the principals about how they perceived themselves as leaders, and we discussed values, and the implementation process of values in schools. Lastly they could share whatever thoughts came into their minds about leadership, values, the research, or anything they wanted to share. The interviews lasted from 18:43 minutes to 52:42 minutes, and when transcribed the interviews were 8-15 pages long. The transcribing was done as accurately as possible taking all linguistic nuances and slang into consideration. All the participants were made sure to know their rights as interviewees, and they could drop out of the research after the interviews if they felt they did not want their answers to be used for research purposes. All participants could also fill in their answers to the transcribed material afterwards, but none has contacted since. The thesis will be shared to the participants after it has been published in the Jultika-library as per the participants' requests.

5.2 Means of analysis

In my research I have used Syrjäläinen's (1990) qualitative content analysis. When analyzing the data using qualitative content analysis the first thing one has to do is get to know the data throughoutly – in other words reading and re-reading the data, and getting familiar with it and its central concepts (Haapaniemi, 2013.) In my research I have formed the theoretical framework first, and I perceive the data through a certain theoretical viewpoint. The content analysis in this research has features of both data-driven analysis, and operating the data with

the theoretical framework in mind. Once the researcher has gone through the data, and the theory multiple times thus sensitizing oneself on the different aspects the data offers the next step is starting to connect the data back to the theory. After this the first rough categories can be formed, and at least some of the central themes might be already apparent from the data. (Metsämuuronen, 2011.)

I got familiarized with the data the traditional way; printing the transcribed interviews out, and doing highlighting and notes with different colors. It is a personal preference of mine of doing notes and highlighting manually instead of using any of my computer's programmes to do so. I read and re-read the data multiple times, and I made relevant notifications under three colors representing three big themes I had also constructed my interview around: values, leadership, and visibility and / or implementation of values. Visualizing the data in different colors made internalizing the data easier for me personally.

After I had read the interviews through many times the data was uploaded to NVivo – a qualitative research analysis tool provided by University of Oulu. NVivo can be used in versatile ways whether you're analysing text, sound, photography, or videos. (Luoma, Karjalainen & Reinikainen, 2011). I had the pleasure of using the newest version, NVivo 12. I uploaded my interviews to NVivo as Word documents, and I started reading the interviews once again now with the help of my notes. I separated every quote I thought would be relevant to my research as nodes, and after a while some nodes started to get more and more quotes. I had thus formed my units of importance with my main themes, values, leadership, and implementation of values in mind. One main task when forming the first units is to take a quote, and try write it simply in a few words, or even less. I will elaborate with an example of simplifying the quotes in Table 1. The quotes are translated from Finnish in the purpose of showing the reader my means of analysis, but the analysis process was conducted through in Finnish. Some of the linguistical nuances may have vanished when the translation has been done (e.g. slang), but the aim was to translate in a manner that best captures the original meanings in Finnish. In Tables 1-3 I will also show the translation process from Finnish to English in order to show how the original transcribed data was handled, but I will leave the translation process otherwise out when presenting the data. I will use my first category, *Working upon values* when giving examples of my category formation.

<p><i>"tuleehan oppilaillekki arvoja sieltä kotoa, kotoakin käsin, että sitten varmaan se voi olla se haaste siinä, että jos ne on ristiriidassa ne, että mitä koulussa viedään eteenpäin, ja mikä se arvomaailma on siellä kotona, että sitten tuota kumpaa uskotaan, sitä opettajaa vai äitiä tai isää." (P1)</i></p> <p><i>"the students get values from home as well, so the challenge in that could be that if they're conflicting with the values that we try to pursue at school compared to what the value-base is at home who are you gonna believe, the teacher, or mom and dad?" (P1)</i></p>	<p>Arvoristiriita Value conflict</p>
<p><i>"voiko se koulu opettaa kovin erilaisia arvoja mitä siellä kotona on" (P1)</i></p>	
<p><i>"can the school teach that different values as what they have at home" (P1)</i></p>	
<p><i>"Totta kai me ei omia arvoja voi sinne, sinne niinku [?]lyödä, että opettajilla on jokaisella omia arvoja, mutta semmoset yleiset hyväksi todetut arvot .." (P2)</i></p> <p><i>"Of course we can't like put our own values there as teachers have also values of their own, but that kind of good common values .." (P2)</i></p>	

Table 1: Simplifying the quotes and creating a first-level category.

Forming categories was an evolving task meaning that once the categorization process went on some of the categories were still looking for their final shape and form. This aligns with the qualitative content analysis process as well – once the first-level categories are formed they can still be returned to, and clarified if needed (Metsämuuronen, 2011). Some of the units of importance had also only small nuance differences, and they were later put under the same category.

In Table 1 the participants had talked about values coming also from home and from the teachers sometimes the situation being that the values can conflict. Hence as all the quotes were about value conflict I created the first shortened description of *Value conflict*, and placed all the quotes under that. *Value conflict* also ended up being the first-level category as all the shortened quotes explained value conflicts in a school context.

Now I had all the quotes of my data written out in shorter forms, or as units of importance – I had tried to make the form as short as possible, one-word descriptions at their best as it diminished the nuance differences, and the data analysis would be easier with short and clear descriptions. Now there were also multiple quotes in some of the units, and I could start assessing which units could be combined to a bigger first-level category. This work was done with my theoretical framework in mind – I had still values, leadership, and implementation of values as bigger themes in mind although I was also combining it with a data-driven method of analysis. By using *Value conflict*, a first-level category I represented in Table 1. as an example, I combined it with first-level categories, and came up with my first second-level category. I have illustrated the formation of the second-level category in Table 2.

Arvojen hajanaisuus Incoherence of values	Haasteet arvotyöskentelyssä Challenges in working with values
Arvoristiriita Value conflict	
Arvojen itsestäänselvyys Taking values as granted	
Usean yksikön johtaminen Leading multiple units	

Table 2: Forming second-level categories.

Here I also stumbled with the issues of translating – here working with values means all the work needed when deciding about values, applying the values, and making the values visible rather than working with values in mind.

After discussions with my thesis supervisor, I was confident in forming my third-level categories which in qualitative content analysis research are also the results of the research (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, n.d.). I will give an example of forming a third-level category in Table 3.

Haasteet arvotyöskentelyssä Challenges in working with values	Arvotyöskentely Working upon values
Arvojen suunnittelu Planning values	
Arvot käytännössä	

Table 3: Forming third-level categories.

Some of the categories were still re-named and re-organized, and I was very happy to have my thesis supervisor's support at all times. When using a qualitative case study with a qualitative content analysis as a research method, the results can vary a lot depending on who analyses the data, but I got the needed reassurance from my thesis supervisor as she seemed to understand the logic behind the categories as well, and I could proceed with presenting my findings. Having someone else view the data is a way of increasing the research's credibility, but here it was also a way of getting the confidence needed in order to move on with the research – sometimes especially with category formation and qualitative content analysis it seems that they could be edited, and edited all over. One important aspect of academic research is to know when to make the decision of setting the final categories instead of finding oneself in a neverending circle of finetuning and editing.

At the end of my analysis I had formed three third-level categories which are *Working upon values*, *Values emphasized by the school*, and *The principal's competence and way of leading*. I have given an example of my category formation process with *Working upon values* category, and I will give more detailed category formations in Chapter 6, *Results*.

The discussion of the results will be presented in Chapter 8, *Discussion*. The discussion's purpose is to present the information gathered in *Results* in a coherent form, and draw conclusions based on the findings to the research questions at hand. (Metsämuuronen, 2011) I have decided to have the ethics and reliability of this thesis as a separate chapter which is why ethical issues will be discussed in Chapter 7, *Ethics and reliability*. Chapter 8, *Discussion*, will bind the results to the theoretical framework, and offer possible new areas of research for the future.

6 Results

In this chapter I will present the most relevant findings of this research. I will present the findings under my third-level categories. The three third-level categories are *Working upon values*, *Values emphasized by the school*, and *The principal's competence and way of leading*.

When presenting the results in a qualitative content analysis research one should keep a clear yet understandable tone in their findings. This means that when explaining a category one translates it to common language, and gives examples from the raw data (e.g. quotes from the interview) to the reader in order to show the credibility of the analysis, and also offering actual examples from the data to support the findings. (Niikko, 2003.) The findings are presented in this chapter, and they are further discussed in Chapter 8, Discussion. With the direct quotes, a gap before, during, or after the quote is marked with two lines “- -“, and if there needed to be a clarification of the context it has been added within brackets “[]”.

6.1 Working upon values

Working upon values is my first third-level category which I already used as an example in Chapter 5.2, *Means of analysis*. I have created Table 4. underneath which represents the first-, second-, and third-level category formation. I have also written in brackets next to the category levels how many that level categories were derived from the data, or with the first-level categories how many times did the theme occur in the data.

First-level categories (9)	Second-level categories	Third-level category
Incoherence of values (5) Value conflict (3)	Challenges in working with values	Working upon values
Taking values as granted (2) Leading multiple units (2)		
Agreeing upon values (22) Concretisation of values (15)		
Visibility of values (10) Following values (5) Transferring values (5)	Planning of values	
	Values in practice	

Table 4: Forming first third-level category, Working upon values.

The third-level category *Working upon values* (= *arvotyöskentely*) includes aspects in planning values, taking the values into practice, and some challenges that may arise when agreeing upon the school's value agenda. The participants discussed values in their school, and how they had agreed upon the values to begin with. Working with values takes a lot of time and effort, and sometimes challenges may arise especially if there are conflicting values with other teachers or the students, and their parents. The principals also discussed the visibility of values, and the implementation process of values in the school setting.

6.1.1 Planning of values

The planning of values was a task which varied from school to school. One of the main aspects which seemed to steer the planning of the school's value base was the core curriculum as the following quotes demonstrate:

P5: "Already the core curriculum mentions values, and the municipal and school specific curriculums supplement the value, so we have done value discussions."

P4: "- - we of course have the Finnish core curriculum, and the city's curriculum so basically no school has to make up the direction we're going to, but there has to be someone who keeps that in mind."

On top of the core curriculum's values some schools had gotten their values from the city or the municipality, and they had then transformed the values to the school's values. This was explained from leadership's point of view – once the city, or your employer gives values for every city employee and organization to follow one should take those values, and follow them. The leader is the one who should foresee that the values their employer has given them are followed. This is illustrated in the following quotation:

P4: "Well, I think this is also a part of leadership as I perceive it so that we do not need other values, than the values given to us by our employer. Then we can derive some sub-values, or how would you put it, say it in other words, but I think those are enough."

The planning of values often included discussions within the school – even if the values were given to the school from the city or the municipality, the schools had to discuss how the implementation process of the values would go. However, some schools did not have defined values per se, but included the principal's views on what the values could or should be:

P1: *“Whether these are the school’s [values] or what I consider important, when we think about the school’s values - -“*

Here the principal discussed the difficulty of separating the school’s values from their own value base. When the values had not clearly been decided upon nor defined, it was difficult to differentiate personal and professional values, or values represented by the school.

6.1.2 Values in practice

When planning the school’s values one of the most controversial aspect was how to put the values into practice. Some schools seemed to have a value base, but some of the values needed defining, and explaining what the value meant in the frames of daily actions. The challenges are illustrated in the following quotations:

P3: *“Yeah, it’s not enough that we say that we are courageous. We have to know what being courageous means for us. Of course the next step is that in the case of courage for example, we have that ‘the courage to disrupt grievance’ – what does it mean? How can we ‘disrupt grievance’?”*

P4: *“- - values are merely words as long as we cannot turn them into practical actions. And that is always the biggest challenge.”*

Once the values had been agreed upon and they had been put into practice the issues with visibility of values, and following the implementation process was also something that the principals seemed to ponder upon. Defining values is already a challenging task, and the principals did not have a direct tool of how to measure whether the values were understood and put into practice. One efficient way of implementing the values to the school cultures was making them visible for all students and staff as participant P3 explains:

P3: *“Or when the children see them [the values] on the hallways, that the courage to disrupt grievance is a big thing for us, they’ll start to comprehend them more. This is the aim [with making the values visible].”*

One aspect of implementing values was how to get all the personnel in the school behind the same value base. One principal also wondered what would be the best way to introduce the school’s values to new teachers employed at the school:

P3: *“We have been thinking about, how would we, if you’d come here as a new teacher that how would we tell you about [our values]? - - Yeah, how can you*

take the values as your own, if we cannot always even name the school's values ourselves."

In some schools the visibility of values was a priority whereas in some schools the visibility of values was more random than systematic. However, the visibility and concretisation of values collected all together 37 references which implies that it was a topic the principals kept discussing about. All schools and their principals brought some aspects to the planning and concretisation of values even if they did not have such a clear value-base for their school themselves. The visibility and concretisation of values seems to be one of the biggest issues when implementing values to an organization. P3 discussed the concretisation of values and gave reasons why values still play an important role although they might be difficult matters to handle:

P3: "- - concretising things, no matter what the thing is, also in values, what does it mean, 'in a concrete way'? Because it does not bring the teacher any tools to do something in the classroom. When a child is crawling under the table it does not give any tools for that, it does not help the daily actions directly. But on the other hand [values] help with reasoning why we do certain things, why I have to disrupt this, and why I don't have to disrupt this other thing. These are value-based choices so that we'll intervene things we've collectively decided to intervene upon - -"

Here the respondent P3 explained the importance of values behind the decisions and actions we make. Although values might not give teacher concrete tools nor help during their tasks they are still in the background defining the way we work and giving us reasons to act a certain way. The most important aspect about this quote is that values are always in the background despite of us not being necessarily aware of them all the time. When we make the effort to discuss values and define them properly we also define the values influencing our work in the background.

6.1.3 Challenges in working with values

Challenges in working with values was a versatile category, and it included incoherence of values, value conflicts, taking values as granted, and leading multiple units. The principals who lead more than one school at a time found unifying the value-base for multiple schools difficult as the following quotations describe:

P1: "At the moment as we are in different locations, and it feels that the values might be

a bit incoherent.”

P2: “- - it is its own challenge to manage multiple units, it would be easier if we were all together in one unit, leading only one unit. - - It takes time to combine the school cultures [for many units] from director’s point of view.”

Here the respondent P1 describes having one school in multiple locations because the original school building had indoor air problems. In fact as a sidenote four out of five participants explicitly explained that they were leading a school with similar indoor air problems. This might give some insight in why values were not necessarily the first thing the principals wanted to take into consideration in their schools as there were more pressing matters at hand. This is not a relevant finding in my research, but something to ponder upon when analysing the results.

The respondent P1 also described value conflicts as a possible challenge when working with values. The respondent explained that the values represented by the school might be in conflict with the values at home:

P1: “- - the students get values also from home, so then the challenge could be that if they’re in conflict with the values the school is trying to take forward, in relation to the value base at home that who are you supposed to believe, the teacher, or your mom and dad?”

If the values represented by the school are in conflict with the values at home the student might be confused about the value conflict. Both the teacher, and the parents are authorities to the child that the child must obey which can lead to a value conflict within the child as well. The child might also have conflicting values in relation to the school or their parents so there are many variables to take into consideration when conducting value work in an organisation.

When discussing the challenges in working with values the incoherence of values, and possible value conflicts arose as the most referenced categories. Values were also sometimes taken for granted, or seen as obvious matters which ran in the background in the school’s daily activities.

P1: “- - they are kind of obvious, the values in the background, so how can we concretely teach them to the students, or is it included in the hidden curriculum - -”

Here participant P1 brings out the hidden curriculum which is an interesting aspect when discussing values. Hidden curriculum usually includes matters which are not formally transferred nor communicated in the learning environment. In other words hidden curriculum includes the values, behaviours, procedures, and norms which are not officially conveyed in the

classroom. Some values might thus be unstatedly promoted or enforced in the teaching. (Alsubaie, 2015.) Bringing up the hidden curriculum can imply that values are always present even if they are on the background, and depending on the teacher different values might be emphasized. Even if the school does not have a set value base, values are still there.

All in all working upon values is a very versatile category, and whether or not the principals had done extensive value work in their schools working upon values seemed to be important or at least intriguing to all of the participants. The ways the principals had decided to agree upon the values varied from workshops to accepting values from their employer, or giving values of their own to the school's value-base. There is no right way in how to define the school's values, and many principals emphasized the importance of talking about values despite of there not being enough time for value work:

P1: *"We should have more time for value discussions."*

P3: *"When we think about it this way, each and everyone of us has to internalize [the values] through discussion, not so that values are merely given from above. This is also why we need to discuss them through."*

On top of discussing the values through the respondent P4 also brought up the necessity of discussing the values through each year in order to keep the values up to date. Deciding upon values together with the teachers or a separate team seemed to be an inclusive and participative way of setting the school's value base.

6.2 Values emphasized by the school

Values emphasized by the school is my second third-level category which includes many values the principals brought up in different contexts. In Table 5. underneath you can view the formation from first-level categories to the third-level category, *Values emphasized by the school* (= *koulun korostamat arvot*).

First-level categories (35)	Second-level categories	Third-level category
Appreciation (3)		
Expertise (2)		
Openness (6)		
Flexibility (2)		
Listening (4)		

Reliability (5) Approachability (2) Presence (2) Enabling (1) Justice (8)	Values supporting the employee	Values emphasized by the school
Well-being (6) Sustainable development (3) Cultural diversity (3) The interest of the child and the student (5) Equality (1) Impartiality (12) Safety (5) Responsibility (3) Individuality (1)	Values in the school cultures	
Good manners (2) Taking everyone into consideration (6) Internationality (1) Politeness (1) Nature values (5) Inclusion (3) Traditionality (5) Honesty (1) Fairness (3) Courage (4) Finnish values (2) Ordinary (1) Support (1) Comfort (4) Caring (4) Community (1)	Values related to learning	

Table 5: Forming second third-level category, Values emphasized by the school.

The third-level category *Values emphasized by the school* can be divided into *Values supporting the employee*, *Values in the school cultures*, and *Values related to learning*. The principals discussed many personal and professional values, and although some overlapped I have done the division of categories to the best of my ability. I will discuss these second-level categories with given examples.

6.2.1 Values supporting the employee

The first second-level category *Values supporting the employee*, or in this case teachers was a category which included values the principals brought up that were especially related to them as leaders, and how the values influenced their employees. The three most referenced values in this category were openness (6), reliability (5), and justice (8).

Openness was explained as being open in situations when the teachers come to share some matters with the principal, and with the principals being open towards the employees as well. Openness could be portrayed through practical actions for example having an open-door policy, or through transparency.

P3: *“And on the other hand when we’re talking openly we can then really talk openly. We are very open around here, and our aim is to make our leadership as transparent as possible.”*

Here participant P3 explained being open through transparency which could be an asset in an employer-employee relationship. Being able to have a conversation about anything was also a way of bringing openness to their way of leading the teachers. Openness was also seen as a positive matter when it worked reciprocally.

Reliability was also an important value when talking about values supporting the teachers and their work as the following quotations imply:

P4: *“Well, relating to taking responsibility, reliability is also related. I have to work so that people experience they can trust me. It’s not merely words that yes you can trust me, but it should be shown in practice.”*

P3: *“Maybe reliability could be one of the most important [values] as a leader as I have to trust my employees to do the work they are appointed, and the employees have to trust me to make the best possible decisions on their behalf.”*

Reliability was also seen reciprocal as participant P3 brought it up – the principal has to trust the teachers, and the teachers have to trust the principal in order for everything to run smoothly. In the Finnish school system the teacher has a lot of autonomy which should be respected by both the principal and the parents. In order for the system to work as it does it takes a lot of reliability and trust from all school personnel, and in that matter all of our society.

Justice was the most referenced value which ensured that the teachers could do their work as well as possible. It was also brought up in the context of students, but here the principals mostly talked about it from employer's point of view. Justice was brought up already when talking about recruiting teachers:

P5: "I cannot treat the person I know differently. I think justice and impartiality are really important."

Impartiality was often linked to justice as well. Some principals had also got feedback from the teachers on what a good leader should be like:

P4: "- - or in the performance appraisals, people bring it up quite often, that they appreciate if the director is fair."

Another example of justice brought up by one of the participants was directly related to being an impartial leader. Sometimes the teachers got varying tasks for example as a part of a team, and they got some compensation for the extra work they had to do. These teams and tasks were then rotated every year in order for everyone getting the chance to work in the team, and thus get the financial compensation of the work as well.

Values were seen to support the teachers in multiple ways. The expertise and the autonomy of teachers were also brought up multiple times as the principals appreciated the teachers and their knowhow, and as already mentioned before some principals saw that one of their main tasks were to ensure the teachers get to perform in their jobs as well as possible. Initially when I started writing my theoretical framework I mostly thought about the values supporting the students and the learning processes, but values can be an asset for teachers as well when discussing their position as an employee. Other values which were brought up when discussing about teachers were appreciation, flexibility, listening, approachability, presence, and enabling. These were all seen supporting the teachers in their work.

6.2.2 Values in the school cultures

The second second-level category which made up the third-level category of *Values emphasized by the school*, was *Values in the school cultures*. This category was first named as *The values of core curriculum*, but after a discussing with my supervisor I ended up changing the name. The core curriculum has its set of values which were discussed in the theoretical framework, but the core curriculum also has values which direct the school cultures directly or indirectly. Thus naming the category *The values of core curriculum* might've been misleading because it includes more values than the values outlined in the core curriculum's value base. Some principals discussed their school-specific values which were also set in this category as the value was a part of the school cultures. Thus the name *Values of school cultures* describes the category better.

The most referenced values in this category were impartiality (12), well-being (6), the interest of the child and the student (5), and safety (5). Impartiality was also brought up when the principals were discussing values supporting the teacher, but here it can be understood in different ways. We should also remember that the school cultures include the staff as well although we might sometimes focus more on the students. Here impartiality was often linked to equality and equity – when deciding upon the resources for example the principal has to allocate the resources as they see fit. This does not necessarily mean that everyone gets the same resources, but the resources should be allocated so that those who need it more also receive more. Well-being was also brought up when talking about teachers and students, but it was also more linked to the school cultures, as P5 discusses in the following quotation:

P5: *“We have thought about well-being, there has been the students' well-being as a theme, and teachers' well-being too, and also we have all together thought about how to make the school a place where one is comfortable and safe.”*

Here it should also be mentioned that well-being as a value can be understood in versatile ways. It might also include some values within like the respondent P5 bringing up the values of comfort and safety. Well-being could be seen as a general value which includes sub-values depending on the context.

The interest of the child and the student was also a value brought up by three of the participants. They had defined it as a value although it could also be an aim or defining matter of teaching as well. Safety was also one of the most referenced values:

P5: “- - it is principal’s job to secure the ensure as good working conditions as possible, to both students an teachers so the work safety and safety of studying .. Yeah, so that everyone feels safe to be here within these walls.”

Here the fact that four out of five of the participants worked in a school which had indoor air problems might have had an effect on which values the principals brought up. Safety and providing safe quarters for both teachers and students could make safety be seen as a more important value, or at least a value that was prioritized.

Other important values the principals brought up when talking about the school cultures were sustainable development, cultural diversity, equality, responsibility, and individuality. Individuality of a student was seen as an important aspect in letting all children flourish as they are:

P3: “- - there are some things which clearly need interference from a leader, grievances and other, but like I said we let everybody pursue themselves the way they want so this is the idea that everyone can do things in their own way.”

Promoting these sort of “positive” values in the school cultures should ensure that the school cultures develop to a positive direction. That being said the principals did not bring out many negative values that might be apparent in their schools – thinking about it afterwards I could have asked more about negative values in general in this research. School culture is also a term which can be defined differently, but here it is understood as the general ways one should act and perform within the school.

6.2.3 Values related to learning

The third second-level category is *Values related to learning*. This is also a versatile category which includes values that might overlap with other categories. The values which come up most frequently in the values related to learning category are taking everyone into consideration (6), nature values (5), traditionality (5), courage (4), comfort (4), and caring (4). When making up the name of the category I once again discussed the category with my thesis supervisor, and after I found the similarities with these values they were set in this category under the name *Values related to learning*.

Taking everyone into consideration is the most referenced value in this category. It was seen as a good guideline in all actions in general, but also something that should be followed through in learning processes as participant P1 explains:

P1: “- - you have to learn how to work as a part of a group and to take everyone into consideration.”

Although the value could be seen as somewhat general one of the school’s purposes is to teach the students “the general good values”, and ways to behave. In other words students are prepared to become active members of their society, and taking everyone into consideration could be a value that also our society wants to pass along. It is also somewhat linked to democracy which is the base of the Finnish society.

Next most referenced value was nature values. Firstly, nature values were defined by the respondent P1 as the following:

P1: “- - that sort of cultural knowhow that how we roam in the nature and how we take advantage of everything the nature gives us - - when we go out campin, the students are also learning to appreciate our nature, and learning how to behave in the nature.”

Nature values and the appreciation of values could be a Finnish phenomenon as not only do we have amazing natural resources the students get to enjoy nature in the school, and learn how they should behave in the wild. Here it should be pointed out that although nature values were referenced many times only one principal discussed nature values. This might be due to local differences, but it also emphasizes the importance of making a value base that represents one’s school specifically – whilst another school might be sustainably conscious another might emphasize inclusion as their main value foundation. Values and defining them is a way of personifying the school as well.

The next most referenced values in this category were courage, comfort, and caring. Courage was defined by two of the principals, and the participant P3 gave courage the following definition:

P3: “So under courage we have come up with the following sentences: evolving together, the courage to try, the courage to disrupt grievance, and putting the strength of the week into action in the whole school.”

Here the principal and the team has chosen courage as one of the values they thought portrayed their school, and they had tried different ways of defining it. Not only giving a definition they had worded the definition into different actions the students could take in order to follow the value of courage. This emphasizes one of the key aspects of Kauppinen's (2002) Vision into Action -model – it is important not only to define the values, but give examples what the definition could look like in practice. The respondent P3 also gave an example of the strength of the week which was to be a strength they chose every week for everyone to consider. This increases the possibilities how the value could be implemented in the school, and gives variety for different learners to shine depending on what the strength of the week was.

Comfort was a somewhat general value as well meaning that the students and the teachers should find themselves comfortable in the school.

P3: *“- - we want to keep the school so that people are comfortable here.”*

P2: *“[School] is not supposed to be a place where you only come to have fun, but when you're comfortable here, and you find it nice, you have friends here, you will feel better, and you will perform better.”*

Again, comfort is a value which can be perceived differently by different people. Here the participant P2 saw comfort as a necessity for performing better. If the students were not comfortable in studying in the school they were it could mean difficulties in the learning processes. Comfort is somewhat related to the last forementioned value: caring. The participant P5 discussed caring as a value when talking about the small size of their school:

P5: *“Well, the community and caring about others, or taking care of others in a small school like ours has to be emphasized.”*

The participant also brought up the varieties in which caring could be executed:

P5: *“Now we have, before the schools were closed we came from spring break, and we kept reminding people about washing their hands, and how to cough right - that's also safety and caring. The concrete actions, we have been reminding people of those throughout the year.”*

Here the COVID-19 pandemic had already happened, and the Finnish schools had already been shut for the time being, and the participant was explaining caring through safety measures in the school. Thus we have another value, caring, overlapping or intertwining with an other value, safety.

Other values which came up in *Values related to learning* were good manners, internationality, politeness, inclusion, honesty, fairness, Finnish values, ordinary, support, and community. The participants described these values in relation to students or learning which is why they were put in the category of *Values related to learning*.

P2: “- - we have to be polite and appreciate all people, regardless of gender, religion, ethnicity - -”

P3: “- - you can be ordinary, being ordinary is enough.”

6.3 The principal’s competence and way of leading

First-level categories (13)	Second-level categories	Third-level category
Distributed leadership (5) Transparent leadership (3) Transformational leadership (3) Pedagogical leadership (1)	Leadership approaches	Principal’s competence and way of leading
Managerial duties (9)	Management	
Empathy (1) Leading by example (2) Reading people (1) Leader as a mediator (2) Problem solving skills (3) Personality (1) Principal as the pavemaker (2) Decision making (11)	Principal’s competences	

Table 6: Forming third third-level category, *Principal’s competence and way of leading*.

The third third-level category is *Principal’s competence and way of leading*. This category consists of three second-level categories: *Leadership approaches*, *Management*, and *Principal’s competences*. This third-level category focuses on the principal as a leader, and the different leadership theories introduced in the theoretical framework. It observes principal’s readiness and way of leading, and discusses the role of a principal as a school’s leader.

6.3.1 Leadership approaches

The first second-level category is *Leadership approaches*. This category includes all the leadership theories the principals themselves mentioned during the interview, and how those theories are applicable to their daily lives as a principal. The theories include all the three theories mentioned in my theoretical framework (distributed leadership, transformational leadership and pedagogical leadership) as well as transparent leadership as a new theory. I decided not to add transparent leadership to my theoretical framework as for example distributed leadership or value-based leadership can have traits of transparent leadership. Some principals also talked about transparency within leadership not transparent leadership per se so adding it to my theoretical framework did not seem as if it was needed. However, I have provided a short description of transparent leadership for the reader to understand this category's findings better.

Transparent leadership or transparency in leadership is directly related to trust in leadership. When a leader is transparent they show the processes of decision-making to the extent they can, and increase the trust between the employer and the employee by showing why their decisions should be trusted. Transparency can create a culture of trust, but one should always be aware of the possibility of oversharing – the balance is important. Bennis, Goleman & O'Toole (2008) describe transparent leadership as being a culture of candor. (Bennis, 2008.) Llopis (2012) suggested that when a leader is transparent problems are solved faster, teams are built easier, relationships grow authentically, people begin to promote trust in their leader, and higher levels of performance emerge (Llopis, 2012).

Transparent leadership was referenced three times throughout the interviews. The respondent P4 explained that being transparent towards their employees makes one's job as a leader easier as well:

P4: *"I for example keep my staff aware of my own comings and goings simply for the reason that I feel that it easier for them to also to contact me at more appropriate times."*

Here the transparency of the principal's own personal or professional matters such as explaining when and why the principal is not available was seen as an alleviating factor for the principal. When the principal was transparent one's own job was seen to become more easier as well in terms of the staff contacting the principal.

The respondent P3 brings up transparency as well since they are trying to keep their leading as transparent as possible:

P3: “- - we try to make our leading as transparent as possible.”

Later on the principal elaborated on the quote by giving an example of discussing everything through before making the decision. This is also linked to distributed leadership which was the most referenced leadership theory within the category. As already mentioned in the theoretical framework distributed leadership can have different features, and ways of executing it. Some principals might distribute different tasks to their staff easing the managerial duties of their own, or some schools might have many units each with principals of their own where the leadership is then also shared through cooperation and a united vision. The participant P5 described shared leadership as a way to share the knowhow within the staff as well:

P5: “And then sharing. Sharing the work and sharing the knowhow. It is important as well.”

Sharing knowhow seems to align with the theoretical framework’s explanation of distributed leadership (or shared leadership) since it can be one of the positive outcomes of distributing tasks. It also relates to transparency as sharing in general can support a culture of trust. The participant P4 explained more throughoutly how distributed leadership works in their school:

P4: “Well, I think that I am one of those inclusive leaders which of course may be in fashion [as a term] right now as well. I do a lot of work with the assistant manager, he / she is my closest work partner, and another work partner is the school secretary. Then we have the school’s planning team which consists of five teachers that have been recruited with different criteria as a representative sample of the whole staff.”

Here the respondent P4 worked closely with the assistant manager and secretary of the school. They also had a group which consisted of teachers that were included in the planning of the school year. The leadership and tasks were thus distributed in different ways. The respondent P3 also explained that distributing decision making does not mean different tasks being distributed within the staff, but it can mean including the students as well.

P3: “- - including students in [decision making] is already embedded to our daily actions.”

The principal also elaborated on including the students giving the example of an active student council. The students were taken into consideration in decision making as well with the example

of making recess rules for the whole school. Including students in planning and decision making was explained through the students' well-being.

The third leadership theory which was brought up within the interviews was transformational leadership. The respondent P4 explained transformational leadership as the leadership of change:

P4: "Well then of course because of the circumstances I am a transformational leader, I lead change all the time. Not only from building to building, but from a learning culture to another which is a lot bigger change than the walls."

Explaining transformational leadership through learning cultures could be interpreted as the learning cultures being in constant change as the world of education keeps moving forward with the ever-evolving society around us. Moving from building to building could be just a reference to a play of words as transformational leadership in Finnish is *muutosjohtajuus*, and moving from a building to another is *muutto*. It can refer to the indoor air problems of the school as well, and having to conduct the educational practices in multiple units. The principal however seems to have a clear picture of what leading change in the context of their school means. The participant P3 brought up the difficulties of leading change all the time:

P3: "Kinda that this is in a way also the change, and change is always difficult to implement. As I said there have been times that we have not had any value discussions. Now that we've began the discussions there's of course comments about the necessity of the discussions. But the discussions are exactly the way how we'll implement [the change]."

When talking about change in this context the principal was referring to changing or creating their school's value-base. They brought up the difficulty of creating a value-base as it would affect the school cultures, and changing cultures can be a difficult task. In order to be implemented fully change needs first and foremost time, and leadership skills. It could also be argued that in order to be able to implement change one needs to have a clear value base to build the change upon.

6.3.2 Management

Second second-level category is Management. This links to the leadership part of the theoretical framework which discussed how the principal's role might have changed to a more managerial

direction (Kankainen, 2018). It was a significant finding in the data since it gave evidence of the principal's more managerial position. This category includes only one first-level category where all the mentions the principals gave about management in their profession were collected. All five principals gave evidence that their daily tasks included mostly managerial matters. Here are a few examples derived from the interviews:

P1: *"Of course we have this managerial side – I do these managerial duties –"*

P2: *"- - our working days are pretty electric - - [The time] is unfortunately spent pretty much on managerial matters."*

P3: *"Yeah, it's management, mostly."*

P5: *"Those are those running errands, the days are filled almost completely by them."*

These were mostly answered when the principals were asked to describe their most common day at work. Managerial duties can be appointed to most leaders in companies and organizations, but often there is someone besides the leader taking more responsibility in management. In the case of a school this is often a vice principal or school secretary, or the work load is otherwise divided, or shared.

The principals' time seemed to be mostly taken by managerial duties. Managerial duties in this case means answering emails and the telephone, organizing and attending meetings, organizing substitute teachers in case a teacher was sick, and reacting to other pressing matters. However, the principal's official position is described more as a leader than a manager although the job title can enclose features of both. This finding is significant when we are thinking about the principal's competences to lead, and implement things such as values or change into the organization. If the principal's time is occupied by running errands the time needed for leadership tasks might reduce. This finding will be further discussed together with other findings in Chapter 8, *Discussion*.

6.3.3 Principal's competences

The third second-level category forming *Principal's competence and way of leading* is *Principal's competences*. This category includes all the factors that could influence the principal's competences as a value-based leader. The most referenced first-level categories

relating to principal's competences were decision making (11), problem solving skills (3), and other factors with one or two references each.

Decision making was the most referenced first-level category of *Principal's competences*. Decision making can be a difficult process for some, and those efficient in it saw decision making an important skill as a principal. One of the most important aspect of decision making was seen to be having a unified front. This means that when a principal has decided upon something such as values it will be then followed through. Bouncing from different frontier to another was seen as a negative trait for a principal:

P4: *"And reliability also in the way that you're not changing direction all the time with how you lead and treat others. So that today we'll do things this way, and tomorrow follow another plan."*

P3: *"Having a steady and stern way of leading is something I have got positive feedback from."*

Here the respondent P4 linked stern decision making to being reliable towards the employees. The respondent P3 had gotten positive feedback from the way they lead and make decisions in the school as well.

Although values were mentioned in the decision making process as well sometimes practical matters such as resources of the school influenced the decision making itself:

P2: *"- - I try to listen and take [the forementioned values] into consideration in the limits the resources, work time, and the surrounding consequences let me."*

The participant P2 explained their value-base as a leader, but in the end noted the influence resources, time, and other consequences might have in the processes. Here values were not seen necessarily as a priority, but they were implemented when there were not other pressing matters at hand. This is very understandable taking the principal's managerial tasks into consideration, and seeing that values might not always be the priority even if they influenced in the background. With the example of having a school with indoor problems taking care of the students' and teachers' safety is of course prioritized, and it might take time from value discussions.

Problem-solving skills were the second most referenced first-level category in Principal's competences related to value-based leadership. Problem-solving skills were seen as a strength for a principal who has to work in versatile situations throughout the year:

P1: *" - - the strength in that may be that you can solve all kind of different daily problems which may arise here."*

It could also be argued that problem-solving skills are a strength to leader of any organization or company. In a school where change is always present and the curriculum alone changes every ten years problem-solving skills can come up very convenient. Problem-solving can also depict the managerial side of the principal's job – new problems can arise frequently, and the principal's efforts are needed in order to solve them in practice.

Other matters which influenced the principal's competences were empathy, leading by example, reading people, personality, being a mediator, and being a pavemaker. One of the most interesting aspects were brought up by participant P5 who stated that as principals do their job with their personality embedded in it so much it is difficult to differentiate the leader and the private person from each other:

P5: *"Well, in the end a person is also conducting a lot of the work with their own personality so they cannot be separated."*

Here the participant was asked about their personal and professional values, and they explained that both of them overlap very much as people in a principal's profession work a lot with their own personality. This is something that has also been said about teachers. When talking about personal and professional values it might be difficult to differ the two as we will always bring a bit of our personality to our work, and it can also work vice versa. However, in this research it was important to ask about both from the principals as some values might be more valuable for leaders, and some might be then personally emphasized.

Another matter more related to value-based leadership than management was keeping the big picture in mind. Although the job ensues many managerial matters the leader should be the one who keep the direction of the organization set, as P4 elaborated in the interview:

P4: *"Well maybe they are, if you otherwise now think what leadership might generally be, I'd like to see myself as a pavemaker – [A pavemaker] is someone who shows the direction where to aim. They keep the big picture in mind - -"*

This quotation gives support to the fact that principals are first and foremost leaders than anything else. They might have differing duties from school to school, but on top of managing the day to day functions in the school they should be able to lead the organization further. It is debatable whether all principals have the same competences, resources, or time-frames to conduct this sort of leadership, but everyone should do their best in the position they are given.

7 Ethics and reliability

During this research I have had the honor to interview five Finnish primary school principals with different backgrounds, and different levels of experience in their professions. I decided to limit the participants to primary school principals as I am most familiar with the primary school's core curriculum, and it has been the focus of my studies. However, it should be noted that one of the principals was also a principal of a lower secondary school as a result of leading more than one school unit. The number of participants for a qualitative master's thesis research is in my opinion sufficient although a bigger amount of participants could increase the validity of this study. However, in qualitative research the aim is not to generalise findings, but understand a phenomenon (in this case principals' views on value-based leadership) more in-depth. It should be noted that the amount of participants would most likely be higher without the COVID-19 pandemic, and its effects on the schools. Two interviews were eventually cancelled because of the situation.

The participants were recruited by convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Convenience sampling is a convenient way of recruiting participants as the recruiting happens through existing relations of the researcher. It can offer an easy and fast way of recruiting participants, but when researching people you know there are many factors that should be taken into consideration. The results gathered do not necessarily represent the population in general, or in this case Finnish primary school principals. (Hayes, 2019.) However, I would like to argue that here convenience sampling was a way of getting participants from different areas in the research. If all the participants were from the same city the representation could be more biased although the aim of a qualitative research is not to gather results that could be applied to the whole population. After reaching out to participants through convenience sampling rest of the interviewees were gathered through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling occurs when the participants of the research recruit more participants as they might have connection within a certain niche – in this case Finnish primary school principals. However, although snowball sampling can give an easier access to a specific group of people it might affect the anonymity of the participants as the participants know each other. (Naderifar, Goli & Ghaljaei, 2017.) I have tried to address this issue by appointing random numbers to the participants (P1-P5) when addressing them in the results, and also removing parts from their direct quotes if they could have given too much information of the participant. I also argue that in this research the

snowball sampling method is justified. However, the reality remains that as some of the participants know each other they might be able to recognize certain matters from the material.

Confidentiality and transparency are important when conducting qualitative research (Metsämuuronen, 2011). The interviewing situations were tried to be kept as natural and conversation-like as possible. I had informed the participants beforehand that I am researching values, leadership, and their connection without giving too much information about the topic. If I was to name for example value-based leadership beforehand the participants could look for information before the interviews, and try to please me as a researcher by trying to give me answers the participants thought I was looking for. However, I argue that giving some background information was justified as the themes of the interview were so large and almost philosophical – how many of us can name values important to us not to mention defining them?

Three of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, and two distantly through video chat or phone call. As interviewing situations the face-to-face interviews seemed more natural since I could read the faces, and gestures of the participants as well. When communicating through phone some information might be lost if the people cannot see each other. The interviews were built around a question-frame, but if the situation needed I was able to ask the participants to elaborate on certain points. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants, and later on transcribed. After the thesis has been published the records will be destroyed, but the transcriptions will be still available in case any of the participants want to receive their transcribed interview. The interviewees were also made sure to know their rights as participants of a study meaning that their information is handled with confidentiality, they can fill in their answers afterwards if they wanted, and they could withdraw from the study at any point. All the participants will also be notified when the thesis is available in Jultika.

I would argue that the methods qualitative case study research, and qualitative content analysis offer were justified in this research. Qualitative research for me was an obvious choice as I find it more comfortable and suitable for myself as a researcher. Content analysis approach is also justified as I was more interested in the principals' perceptions of values and leadership. Perceptions of phenomena can vary a lot although the phenomenon would be quite the same in all environments.

When analyzing the data one has to be aware of their own biases and expectations. Looking at the data through the theoretical framework's point of view in content analysis is justified, but one has to be careful not to try to look for certain connections that are not necessarily there. The

researcher should be an objective observer who is able to analyze the data without letting their own opinions affect the process. The perceptions of a phenomenon are often tied to the context of the phenomenon, and we have to be aware of the possibility of perceptions changing throughout time. (Metsämuuronen, 2011.) It can be argued that the results of this research might not be applicable in ten years anymore even if it was replicated as accurately as possible. In the process of analysis I tried to see myself as a separate observer of the data, and kept the analysis process bound to only the data not my own assumptions.

As some of the categories and values overlap one should keep in mind the researcher's own lens and biases through which one is conducting this research from. Some other researcher might have made different connections and categories with the information at hand. However, after analysing the data I think these categories fit my purposes, and my theoretical framework quite well. These categorisations also fill the requirements of qualitative content analysis.

All in all if the research would be replicated there should be more attention paid to the anonymity of the participants if possible. In a research as small as this convenience sampling and snowball sampling were justified especially when trying to reach a niche group like Finnish primary school principals. Simple random sample could be used in a research like this as well. Simple random sample would give a fairly representative sample of the whole population when all the participants would be randomly chosen in the experiment. (Khan Academy, 2020.) The research could also have more participants thus increasing the validity of the research. The whole research process took me three months which again raises the reliability of the research as the data collection and analysis did not occur far apart. The theoretical framework was also fresh in mind when connecting it to the data.

8 Discussion

In this chapter I discuss the findings for my research question from different perspectives. My research question for this thesis was the following:

1. How do principals conceptualize value-based leadership?

In the theoretical framework there were two big main themes: values and leadership. I created the theoretical framework and the whole research based on the assumption that Finnish primary school principals are inevitably value-based leaders as there are values that should be embedded in the school cultures. I was interested to find out how principals view values and leadership together, and how values can influence their jobs as primary school principals. However, as this research is a qualitative case study the results cannot be generalised, but each case reveals something about the general phenomenon, in this case value-based leadership. It can be assumed that the many aspects the principals discussed throughout the interviews can be a reality in other Finnish primary schools as well to some extent.

In this study the first way of conceptualizing value-based leadership by Finnish primary school principals according to the third-level categories described in *Results* is working upon values. In other words it can be described as all the work embedded in value planning, defining values, implementing values, and making the values visible in the school. Value-based leadership in an organisation has multiple steps according to Kauppinen (2002). Firstly, the organisation should choose the values they want to implement and portray. Secondly, the values have to be defined clearly in order to implement them into action. Thirdly, the values are taken into the working cultures of the organisation making sure that all members of the organisation have internalised the values, know the meaning of the values, take the values as their own, and forward the values as members of the organisation. After a successful value implementation the values chosen by the organisation will become something the members are proud to represent as well. (Kauppinen, 2002.)

The value-based work done by the Finnish principals varied from school to school. Based on my findings some phases of Kauppinen's model were clearly visible in the principals' interviews, but none of the participants described value-based leadership as clear phased process. Although values were sometimes seen as self-evident and always inevitably present there was not a clear apparent model for value-based leadership introduced by the principals. In one school the school had not chosen values of their own, but they rather used the values of

the municipality in their school as well. Other schools also referred to the values of their employer, and saw it as their duty to follow the values given to them from above. This can be problematic with value-based leadership – when working with values that we might not necessarily feel as our own, or if we have not been able to influence the value planning process the values might seem unnecessary, or the process to internalise the values can take longer. With value-based leadership the agreeing upon values should always be done so that people in the organisation can influence the process as deciding upon the values already gives meaning to the chosen values. (Kauppinen, 2002.) This does not mean that if the values are not chosen by the organisation’s members explicitly they will not work for implementing those values, but the value-application process itself might become longer and less meaningful. Here good leadership is also the key to make everyone understand and internalise the same value base. Although not all the schools had clearly defined the values all principals gave examples of their own value-base, their value base as leaders, and the school’s values. At least one of the schools had clearly decided upon the values with the staff, defined the values, and given practical meanings to the definitions meaning that each definition had certain ways the student could act in order to be courageous for example. This falls under Kauppinen’s VIA (“Vision into Action”) model where not only were values chosen, but they were given a meaning.

One aspect of working with values was taking values for granted meaning that sometimes the school community finds values obvious, and do not necessarily see the need in defining the values any further. Most of the learning material such as books have already been created with the core curriculum’s aims and values in mind so the values defined by the core curriculum can be forwarded to the students unconsciously by the teachers in the classrooms. When the values are given a meaning it shows evidence of conscious value-choices, and value-work done by the schools and the principals. Many principals were aware of the values being in the background even if they had not been defined. One of the principals explained this by schools having a hidden curriculum – even if the values were not written in the school’s action plan per se they can be a part of the hidden curriculum, and thus be forwarded to the students in the classrooms.

When the values had been agreed upon and at their best defined making the values visible for everyone in the school including students was seen as an important task. Values were made visible by few of the schools writing them in the school’s action plan, and later on reflecting upon the visibility in the school’s action report. The school’s action plan defines what the school year will be like, and the action report describes afterwards how the school year has gone. One principal also wanted to make the values visible to the students in the school by having for

example posters in the school, or bringing up values in different contexts such as nominating a strength of the month for the whole school to aim towards to. Visibility of values does not necessarily have to be posters on the wall, but it is an example of how it could be implemented. Following the actual implementation process of values, and whether the teachers portrayed the values in practise is difficult as Finnish teachers have a lot of autonomy (Tervasmäki, 2016). In some cases the principal just has to trust their employees to follow the school's policies which emphasizes the difficulties of implementing values in the first place. I argue that in another organisation than school the implementation process could be more easily followed as employees of another organisation might not have so much autonomy nor freedom.

The principals had varied opinions and perceptions about the implementation processes of the values, and how the values were visible in their school. In some cases the principals were able to name their school's values, but the concretisation of the values was seen as an obstacle. In Kauppinen's VIA model after the values have been agreed upon, and they have been defined they should be implemented into the organisation's cultures. At its best the model helps the employees to take the values as their own being proud of the values the organisation represents, and taking them forward elsewhere as well. (Kauppinen, 2002.) In a school setting this could mean that the teachers are included in the value-choosing processes they get to take part in defining them, and they will forward the values to the students in the classroom not only because they have to, but because they are proud to represent these values. Taking part in the planning phase makes internalizing the values easier as many principals also brought up. Following the VIA model would also give some ease to the concretisation of values as in not only defining the values, but giving examples what the values could mean in practice. Only one principal had a clear value-base creation process where the staff was included, and the values were not only defined, but exemplified, and there were plans to make the values more visible in the school. This does not mean that all other schools had no value-base at all, but that they brought up the struggle of putting the values into practice as a part of the value creation process.

The second way of conceptualizing value-based leadership by the principals was describing the values emphasized by the school. When discussing values embedded in the school we can look at them through the school's cultures, and values related to learning. The most referenced values in these categories were well-being, the benefit of the student and the child, impartiality, safety, taking everyone into consideration, nature values, traditionality, courage, comfort, and caring. Principals saw these values as important in relation to the school's cultures and learning. Values such as openness, listening, reliability, justice, and appreciation were perceived as values which

supported the teachers as employees in their professions. Many of the forementioned values overlap with the values of the core curriculum such as the right to good education and equality (here named as impartiality, *tasapuolisuus*). Some other values from the core curriculum's value-base were also mentioned, such as equality, democracy, cultural diversity as an asset, and sustainability (Opetushallitus, 2014; Tervasmäki, 2016).

The core curriculum seems to be one of the bases where the school's value base could be built up from as well. Principals as leaders need to first and foremost oversee the implementation of the core curriculum – they have the responsibility of following the national core curriculum, plan their school's own curriculum, and make sure that everyone is on the same page about the goals and contents of the curriculum. Although not all values of the core curriculum were explicitly mentioned it does not mean that these values are not visible in the school's cultures.

The third and final way of conceptualizing value-based leadership by the primary school principals was the principal's competence and way of leading. Although not all principals had gone through all the steps of the VIA-model they were able to give many examples of values they represented as leaders, or their school had chosen to emphasize. When discussing their perceptions of themselves as leaders values such as openness, appreciation, listening, justice, and enabling were mentioned. The principals generally viewed these values as important values when discussing themselves as leaders. These values were seen to be important in their jobs as leaders towards their staff especially. Keeping the leadership transparent was one way of showing openness, and openness was maintained with discussions, reflection, and being vulnerable in the sense that the principal could keep their staff up to date for some of their personal matters in order to show openness, and also requesting understanding from the staff. These values are not necessarily linked to only principals, but leadership in general as they were perceived as positive values for a leader to have.

As Sahlberg (2000) stated the leader of a school has a significant role in constructing the school's ethical base (Sahlberg, 2000.) Kauppinen (2002) also brought up that the ethical base of a school is directly linked to values as values represent the ethics of an organisation (Kauppinen, 2002.) Once the school is led forward with a strong value-base it can guide the whole education system towards ethical stances which can lead to positive change (Sahlberg, 2000.) Therefore, principals can be value-based leaders even if they do not practise it consciously. The principals had different ways they perceived themselves as leaders some differences being explained by personality differences or situational differences such as in what

kind of school they worked in. However, all principals thought that values are important even if the school's values were not clearly defined. The need for more value work or value discussions was also expressed by the principals. It was also brought up in different interviews that the principal understood their importance as a leader when value work was conducted. Being able to discuss values through and work with values was also seen important by all principals nevertheless of the amount of value-work they had done.

At times the everyday practicalities of the principals' profession were taking time from value planning. The principals' work days were described as very managerial meaning that the principals had many running errands and meetings to attend to taking time from other leadership matters. Although all principals seemed to work closely with someone or a team their work days still filled with managerial matters. Juuti (2000) discussed the difference between management and leadership explaining it through the setting where they are applied. In a fast-paced organisation like the school where change is always present leadership is a more appropriate approach, but in organisations where the surroundings and situations do not change rapidly management can be applied (Juuti, 2000). Hickman (1990) argues that the organisation should find a balance between leadership and management which has also been the case of Finnish primary schools – both approaches are needed. When the leader is able to think in managerial ways, managing the daily operations of the organisation, without forgetting the visions, goals, and direction of the organisation they are able to provide better guidance to the organisation as leaders. (Hickman, 1990.)

Distributed leadership could offer some solutions to the principals' time-management and managerial matters in general. The interviewees already mentioned that they were working closely with either the vice principal, the school secretary, or teams of teachers in varied contexts, sharing work, and sharing the knowhow as well. There are many ways of distributing leadership from sharing tasks to having co-leadership in a school (Gronn, 2004), but all principals gave some examples how distributed or shared leadership was conducted in their schools. It could also be argued that in order for distributed leadership to work as well as possible it is important for all people involved in distributed leadership to have agreed upon a common value base. If the values of different leaders differ significantly distributed leadership can become more difficult. Fluent distributed leadership therefore requires at least some shared values.

One interesting factor that could affect the value work done in the school was that almost all the principals interviewed were working in a school with indoor air problems. When there are extra factors to take into consideration throughout the year they are bound to take time from other matters such as working with values. The extra factors can also influence what values are prioritized and emphasized by the leader. It is very understandable that the safety and comfort of the staff and the students is always prioritized, but on top of the managerial matters the principals have they can have issues with time and resources when thinking about implementing values in their schools. Principals might simply have too much on their plates to be able to distribute their time and effort impartially. This is an interesting notion which could be researched further. Indoor air problems in Finnish schools are very common, and can have many consequences for the leaders and leaderships.

Despite of the principals viewing values as important, and wishing there was more time to discuss and put focus on values not all schools had a defined value base. This does not mean that values were absent, but the values lacked a clear definition, or what they could mean in practice. It should be noted that the principals who had not defined values in their schools, still thought that it should be done in the future in order to make the values clearer for everyone. Values were deemed important, but not everyone had had the time to conduct the work. The managerial matters play a role here as well – although values were perceived important, and the principals realized the work needed to be done around values due to different circumstances the value-work had not necessarily been fully conducted. It could be argued that value-based leadership was being conducted to some extent in the schools, but being able to pursue it fully the principals need more time and resources. Principals' work vary from school to school as every school comes with different assets and challenges which is why it is also difficult to measure how the principals would conceptualise value-based leadership itself. Going back to the versatile manner of principal's job, and how the description of the job has changed throughout the years it could be that the principals' time will be occupied more with managerial matters. As Kankainen (2018) described in his article the principals' profession is going towards more holistic direction as it has become more and more difficult to define what is *not* a part of principal's job anymore. It needs true pedagogical leadership skills to be able to prioritize the tasks in order to flourish in their jobs. (Kankainen, 2018.) In relation to Kankainen's argument Lampinen (2003) explained the skill of lifelong learning as a way to keep our comprehensive school system up to date. This calls for revision of its aims and values, and updating them when needed. (Lampinen, 2003.)

The obviousness of values was also seen as an important factor when discussing values – values are always influencing us even if we do not decide so consciously. We come across value choices as subjective beings very often so being aware of values can be seen as an asset. However, I cannot say that values in general were explicitly emphasized in any of the schools although some schools had done more in the field of values than others. There were some values that were emphasized more than the others which can be due to the principal's own preference, or other factors such as the school's location and resources. In a small school of a smaller village nature values might be obvious to emphasize as even without defining the values they are already a big part of the school's cultures. This is one interesting aspect of value choices as well – sometimes we choose values for an organisation ourselves, but sometimes some values are already embedded into the cultures of the organisation in a way that they seem obvious for everyone in the organisation arising from the circumstances of the organisation itself. In this case the values were related to the environmental factors of the school. However, when certain values arise as the school's values even without having to define them there is still value work being done as the values are in the school's cultures. Defining the values would be important in order to ensure that everyone has the same perceptions about the values even if they were considered obvious.

All in all the principals conceptualized value-based leadership as working upon values, values emphasized by the school, and through their own competence and way of leading. The principals perceived values important, and realized the time needed for value-discussion, and value-work. This had been conducted in the limits the work time, resources, and other matters made possible. Although some schools had not defined their value base every principal was able to name values important for themselves, important to them professionally, and important to the school they lead. For future research it would be interesting to see how the managerial matters of principals' profession influence the way principals are able to prioritize certain things or themes, in this case values. In this research managerial matters seemed to be one of the main issues which came in the way of working with values. Also the concretisation of values was seen as a challenge as it is easier to name values than to put them into practise. It would also be interesting to see if there is any difference when implementing values that are given to the school than the school planning, defining, and then implementing values themselves. According to Kauppinen's (2002) model the implementation process should be easier when the people in the organisation can influence and participate in the value-work taking place. The fact that principals were still able to give detailed definitions of values in their school is still admirable

especially taking the management aspect of a school into consideration. I am personally a bit worried that if the principal's job description is going towards a more managerial direction some issues requiring strong and steady leadership might not get the attention they need. At the same time I have a strong trust towards the educational leaders in Finland as a whole, and the same way we should respect teachers' autonomy we should try to preserve principals' autonomy. Being able to share the responsibility and tasks with someone could be the answer as it would let principals focus on prioritized matters over running errands. However, I am sure the principals are doing everything they can in order to ensure good quality education to their students, and trustworthy leadership to their employees. Hearing what the principals would enhance in their profession should be one of the building foundations of the principals' job description in the future. It is now our and the society's job to ensure that the principals are given the tools to conduct their jobs to the best standards.

9 References

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10 Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1: Structure of the interviews

Background information for the participant:

I am a fifth year teacher student from the University of Oulu, and I am writing my master's thesis about Finnish primary school principals as value-based leaders. I am mostly interested in principals' perceptions on values and leadership, and how the two might relate to each other.

Please answer the questions as thoroughly as you can – do not assume, that I already know something beforehand. All views and experiences are valuable for the research. If you want, I can send the transcribed material to you afterwards. Your information will be handled with trust and anonymously. You have also the right to withdraw from the research, or fill in your answers to the transcribed material afterwards.

Questions about the principal's background:

1. Tell me about your work history.
 - a. Where did you study and when did you graduate?
 - b. What kind of different tasks have you had throughout your career?
 - c. How did you end up in your current position as a principal?
2. Describe your current place of work. How does it differ from other schools you have worked in?
3. What are your school's strengths from your point of view?
4. What kind of challenges have arisen in your school (if any)?

Interview questions:

5. What kind of leader do you view yourself as? + Describe your ordinary day at work.
 - a. How have you tried to develop yourself as a leader?
 - b. What are your strengths as a leader?
 - c. Which areas of your leadership would you like to develop further?

6. How would you describe your own value base? What kind of values are personally important to you (also outside of your profession, as a private person)?
 - a. How would you define these values?
 - b. How do these values affect your life in practise?
7. What are the most important values for you as a leader?
 - a. How do values define your style of leading? (e.g. Are they important? Do they affect decision making?)
 - b. (If the values do not define your style of leading, how else can they found from your job as a leader?)
 - c. How are values visible in practice in your job as a leader?
 - d. Why the forementioned values are important for a principal?
8. What are your school's most important values?
 - a. How have you defined the values?
 - i. Do you think defining values is important?
 - b. How can we view the values in practice in your school?
 - c. How have the values been implemented in the school cultures?
 - d. How did you agree upon the values? (e.g. through the core curriculum, together with teachers, the values were already there) Have the value choices been made awarely or unawarely? If you chose the values together with a team, did everyone agree upon them?
 - e. What makes taking the values into the school cultures difficult?
9. Last but not least – is there anything else you would like to share about values, leadership in the world of education, or this research in general?

Thank you very much for your time! The thesis will be assessed in May / June, and it can be accessed through Jultika-services in June. If any further questions or comments arise, please contact me by email!