Grounding Research on Curriculum Work and Reform (in and for Political Democracy) in Education Theory

Beyond universalism, particularism, reproductionism and activism

Michael Uljens
Åbo Akademi

Structure

I. What do we expect a Theory and Research of *Curriculum Work* and *Curriculum Reform* to perform?

II. How are existing approaches to CT capable of answering questions posed?

III. Non-Affirmative Education (NAT) as a possible alternative – limitations and need for future developments.

I. What do we expect a Theory of Curriculum Work & Reform to perform?

i. Analysis of **contents of the curriculum** - aims, subject matter and methods

ii. Historical curriculum research.

iii. Translation/Refraction/Enactment between and within different levels.

iv. Stages of **curriculum reform (i.e. reform of aims, subject matter, methods)** e.g. *initiation*, *implementation*, *enactment*, *development* and *evaluation* of curriculum.

v. Curriculum/Policy **borrowing/recontextualization** between and within nations-states.

vi. Curriculum / Didactical **Design and Intervention Research**.

Increasing interest for
Multi-level Approaches to
Curriculum Work and Curriculum Reform

1st order Educational Leadership
Classroom/teachers "teachers leading students' studying (learning)"

2nd order Educational Leadership
Schools/principals/headteachers "leaders leading teachers' teaching"
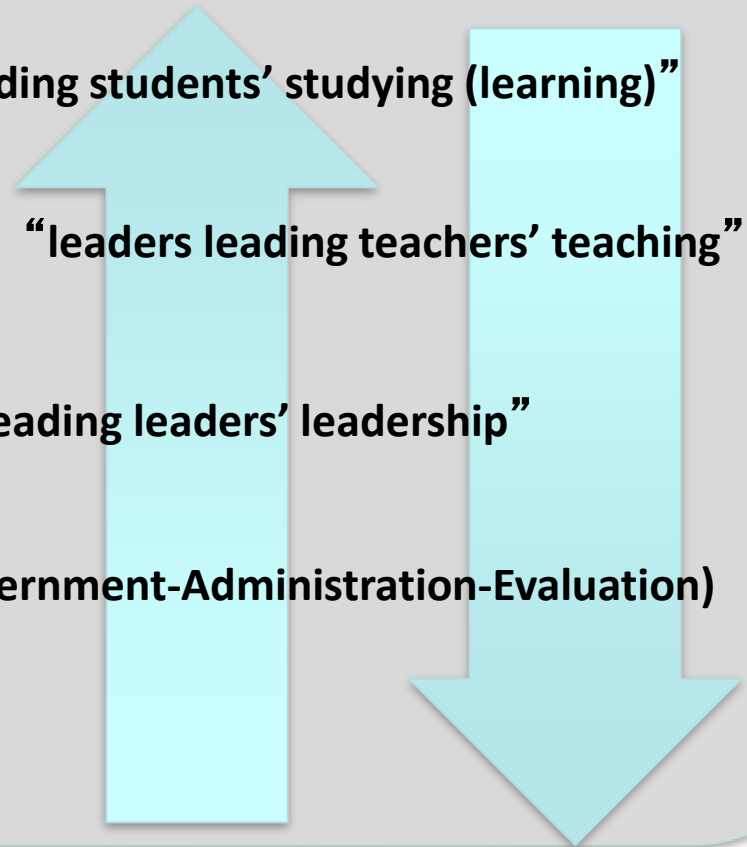
3rd order Educational Leadership
Municipal/district level "leaders leading leaders' leadership"

4th order Educational Leadership
National – State – Substate (Government-Administration-Evaluation)

5th order Educational Leadership
Transnational & International

Curriculum Work and Curriculum Reform – same or different?

1. If Curriculum Work as Pedagogical Practice is our object then we need educational theory (e.g. Didaktik)

2. If Curriculum Reform (of pedagogical practice) operates through a Pedagogical Practice, then research on Curriculum Reform requires educational theory.

		School Practice **Curriculum Policy, Governance & School Management, Leadership and Teaching**	*School Reform* **Curriculum Reform and School Development – "Change"**
AIMS	Why?		
CONTENTS	What?		
METHODS	How?		
CONTEXT	Where?		
SUBJECTS	Who?		

II. How are existing approaches to CT capable of answering questions posed?

or

Do we need education theory for curriculum research?

The Problem:

1. **Particularist approach:** **DIFFERENT theories → MULTI-disciplinarity**

2. **Universalist approach:** **ONE theory for ANY policy translation/reform**

1st order Educational Leadership
Classroom/teachers "**teachers leading students' studying (learning)**"

2nd order Educational Leadership
Schools/principals/headteachers "**leaders leading teachers' teaching**"

3rd order Educational Leadership
Municipal/district level "**leaders leading leaders' leadership**"

4th order Educational Leadership
National — State – Substate **(Government-administration)**

5th order Educational Leadership
Transnational & International – **EU, OECD, World Bank, WTO, UN, etc.**

	Universalist approaches	Particularist approaches
	V. Schmidt – Discursive institutionalism N. Luhmann – Systems theory B. Latour – Actor Network Theory G. Steiner-Khamsi – Policy borrowing	P. Heimann – Berlin didaktik F. Marton – Phenomenography U. P. Lundgren-Curriculum theory C. Day - Successful leadership M. Fullan – Systems leadership
	I. Goodson – Refraction S. Ball - Policy enactment I. Wallerstein – World systems th. P. McLaren – Curriculum	W. Klafki – Critical-constr. Didaktik C. Shields – Transformative leadership W. Carr & S. Kemmis - Action research

1a. Universal Approaches - + and -

Strength:

- Systematic & including conceptual apparatus for the whole system
- Often focus on "change" or reform
- Methodology reflected
- Well established internationally – international language

Weakness:

- Lacking a theory of the specific *object studied* (object theory/curriculum/school)
- Often *curriculum reform* are implemented/enacted by ***educational*** *means*, efforts and initiatives

    How does **policy** transform into **educational leadership**?

    How does **leadership** transform into **teaching**?

    How does **teaching** transform into student **learning**?

1b. ''Particularist'' approaches + and -

- **Curriculum Reform & Policy Research**

- **Educational leadership**

- **(Fach)Didaktik –Teaching – Teaching theory**

Strength: Very Good Substance Theory!

Weakness: A particularist take forces curriculum research to become cross- or multi-disciplinary.

Risk: A particularist approach may dissolve into a number of sub-perspectives that do not necessarily communicate.

Discoursive Institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008)

Different ideas

- **Cognitive Ideas (reason, how) and**
- **Normative Ideas (values)**

Ideas expressed at different levels:

- **Philosophical**
- **Policy and**
- **Programmatic levels**

DI studies discourse

- **Text** (what is said/done),
- **Context** (where, when, how & why are ideas conveyed) and
- **Agency** (who said what to whom)

Agency

- ideas can be conveyed in different ways, eg. affirmative vs non-affirmative ways

Discursive Institutionalism

+ Curriculum reform a discursive process based on **ideas**!

+ **Refined conceptual system** for policy enactment/implementation in **different types** of polities

+ DI shares the **non-hierarchical view of relation between politics and education,** that creates discursive spaces

- DI a **universal theory** of **any policy** initiation, implementation, reform

- DI **lacks a theory of education**

2. Reproductionist and – Activist-Transformative Approaches in Curriculum Theory and Didaktik

- Analytical "Reproductionism"
    - often politically naïve, conservative, socialization and consensus oriented, promoting efficiency in reproduction-oriented pedagogy (e.g. school effectiveness research)

- Normative "Activism"
    - critical, conflict oriented, counter-hegemonic, not only emancipatory but also idealist and utopian,
    - the difference between curriculum as a political document and as a theory may disappear

A utopian educational philosophy is characterized by a:
1) critique of the status quo,
2) an ideal-driven hope for the future, and
3) a plan for making the ideal vision a reality.

	Universalist approaches	Particularist approaches
Reproductionist - **Consensus theories** - **An analytic approach**	V. Schmidt – Discursive institunionalism N. Luhmann – Systems theory B. Latour – Actor Network Theory G. Steiner-Khamsi – Policy borrowing	R. Tyler P. Heimann – Berlin didaktik F. Marton – Phenomenography C. Day - Succesful leadership M. Fullan – Systems leadership
Critical and emancipatoric transformation - **Conflict theories** - **A normative approach**	I. Goodson – Refraction S. Ball - Policy enactment I. Wallerstein – World systems th. P. McLaren – Curriculum	W. Klafki – Critical-constr. Didaktik C. Shields – Transformative leadership Carr & Kemmis - Action research

04.12.2019

Activist leadership research

Carolyn Shields (2019) AERA: (The "transformative approach")… to educational leadership … has the potential to support schools that are inclusive, equitable, excellent, and socially just. It will refute current calls for a non-affirmative approach to curriculum and leadership (Uljens & Ylimaki, 2017) and instead, emphasize "the fundamental principles of the transformative axiological assumption [which] are enhancement of social justice, furtherance of human rights, and respect for cultural norms"

- **Is activist transformative approach to leadership perhaps more an example of educational politics than a theory of education?**

- **NAT would instead ask: what do we mean by social justice, how should we further human rights, what does respect for cultural norms mean?**

- For NAT the pedagogical task is to a) **recognize** these values and b) to **challenge** prejudices & taken for granted assumptions, reflect about what these concepts mean, and c) not to uncritically affirm them by defending taken for granted answers to them.

- What is the difference between politics and education as practices in a democracy?

- **Dilemma with both "reproduction*ism*" and "activ*ism*"**
= Education instrumentalized

If citizenship education aims at supporting the learners discerning thought, capacity to act guided by reflected will (ethical awareness), and practical ability to contribute to societal reform and revolution culturally, economically and politically in a democratic society then both reproductionism and activism are moribund pedagogical approaches.
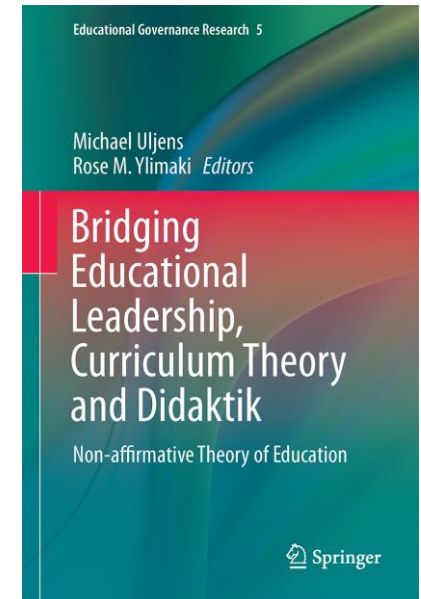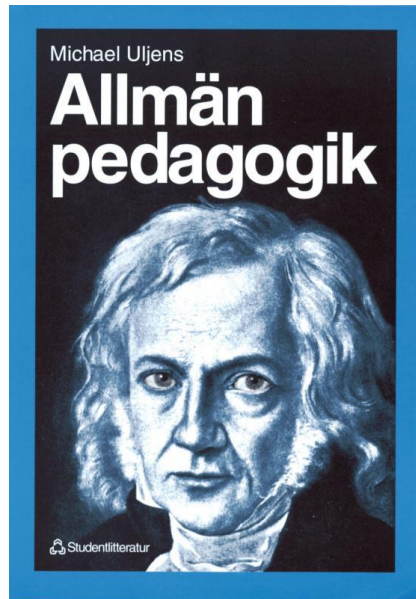
Is a third position?

Beyond

a) "particularism" and "universalism"

and

b) reproductionism and activism?

Non-Affirmative Education Theory?

3. Non-Affirmative Education (NAT) as an alternative?

**D. Benner's ideas interpretation
of non-affirmative theory of education -
introduced in nordic countries 1998**

The Problem:

1. **Particularist approach:** DIFFERENT theories → MULTI-disciplinarity

2. **Universalist approach:** ONE theory for ANY policy translation/reform

1st order Educational Leadership
Classroom/teachers "teachers leading students' studying (learning)"

2nd order Educational Leadership
Schools/principals/headteachers "leaders leading teachers' teaching"

3rd order Educational Leadership
Municipal/district level "leaders leading leaders' leadership"

4th order Educational Leadership
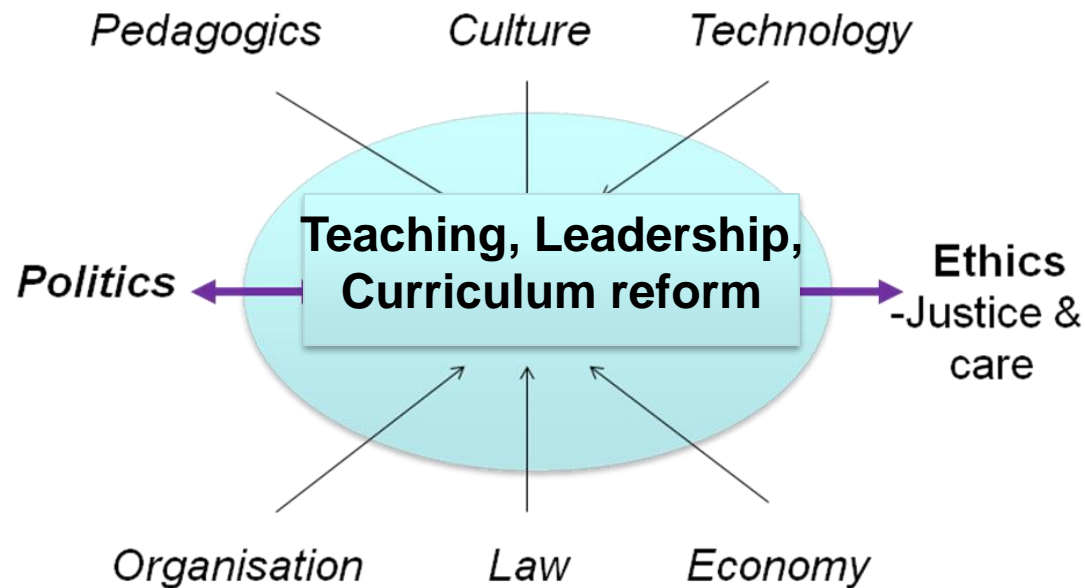**National — State — Substate** (Government-administration)

5th order Educational Leadership
Transnational & International – EU, OECD, World Bank, WTO, UN, etc.

NAT
Curriculum Work and Curriculum Reform as
Pedagogical Activity within and between different levels

Hermeneutic, mediational, normcritical, recontextualizing and distributed practices

NAT: **To what extent does curriculum policy and reform allow for non-affirmative pedagogy?**
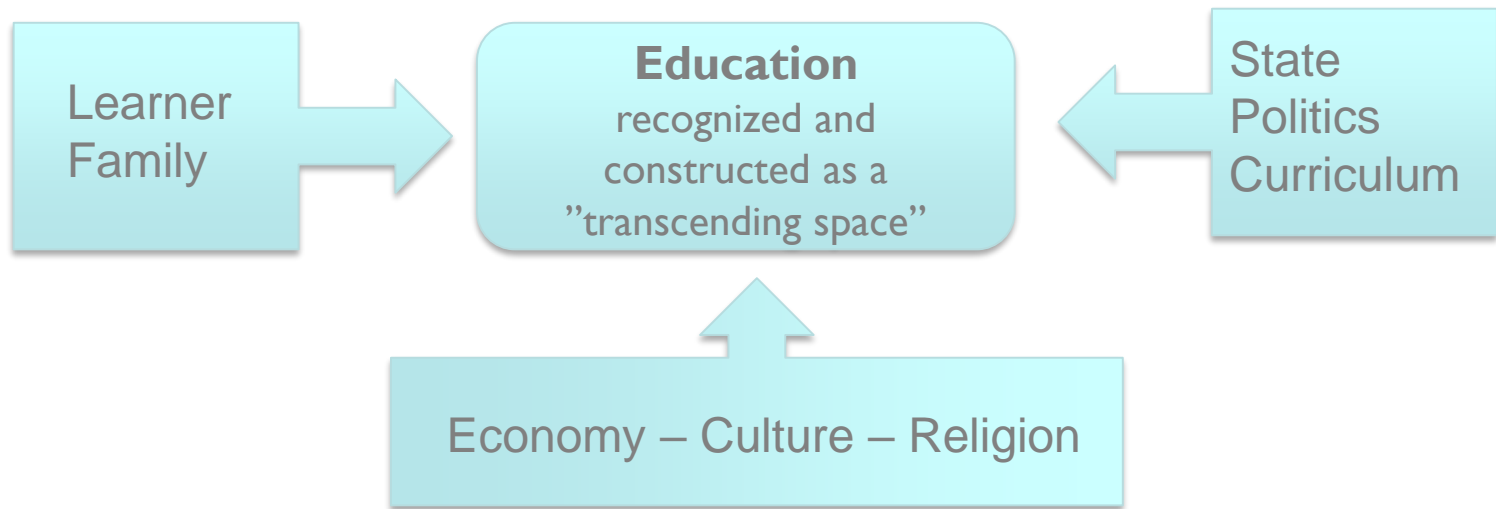**How do actors make use of existing degrees of freedom?**

Diskursiva rum konstitueras och konstrueras av icke-hierarkiska relationer mellan, bl.a. (a) pedagogik och etik, (b) pedagogik och politik samt (c) pedagogik och juridik
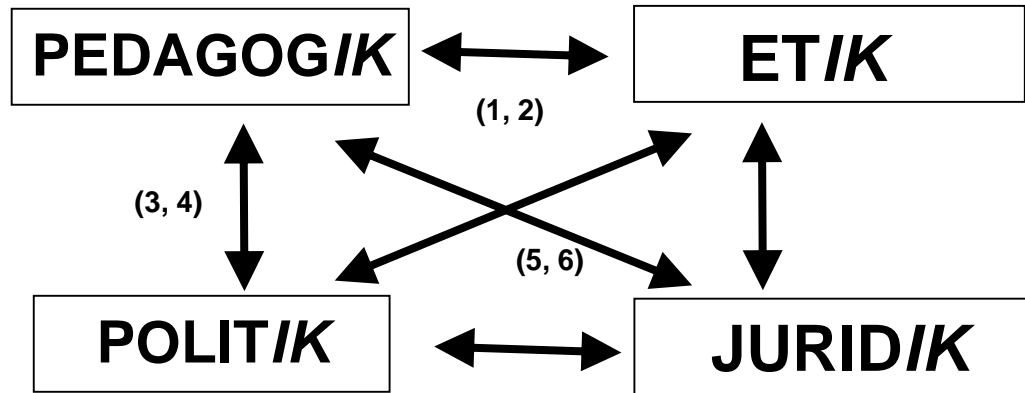
1. Etiken väcker frågor om det pedagogiska handlandets etisk-moraliska ansvar och kvaliteter (jfr. Levinas)
2. Subjektets förståelse av sig själv som moraliskt ansvarig utvecklas i relation till pedagogiskt handlande (ex. Honneth)

3. Politisk demokrati reglerar frihetsgrader för pedagogiskt handlande.

4. Pedagogiskt handlande förbereder för och bidrar till att upprätthålla politiskt deltagande och demokrati.

5. Lagen (juridiken) reglerar pedagogisk praktik (pedagogiken laglydande).
6. Pedagogiken förbereder för medverkan i lagstiftande.

Non-Affirmative Education and Power

```
Learner
Family              ──►    Education
                           recognized and        ◄──    State
                           constructed as a              Politics
                           "transcending space"          Curriculum

                                  ▲
                           Economy – Culture – Religion
```

Recognition **of individual and societal interests – "Yes"**

Affirmation of interests and policies – "No"

Non-affirmative theory

- as an analytical tool

"To what extent does curriculum & policy allow for and promote practitioners freedom for reflection and action with pedagogical motives?"

- as a normcritical approach

"A teacher should be aware and recognize how e.g. societal, political, religious, cultural and economical, etc interests influence curriculum and teaching, but should not affirm these but Involve learners in critical pedagogical reflection thus creating a constructive space for Bildung."

Problem B.
Pedagogical interaction

Education / Bildung as theory
of *being* and/or *becoming*?

- Paradox of *being and becoming the same (freedom and equality) and different (corporeality, subjectivity, identity)*

- **Being**

  The subject

  a) **is** different from each other and

  b) **is** the same (freedom, equal) as each other.

- **Becoming**

  The subject

  a) **becomes** different from everybody else and

  b) **becomes** the same (free and equal) as the Other, sharing something (language, knowledge, values, etc).

04.12.2019

A Social Philosophical/Psychological Approach Recognizing Subjectivity vs Intersubjectivity – what comes first?"

A. "Ego-logical" positions argue that:

1. Independent, self-conscious subjects comes first: "Without such individual self-awareness/consciousness intersubjectivity (or a contract) could not be established."

2. The Transcendental I not *dependent* on the Other, it is in no need to be recognized by anybody. Subject is in a way self-sufficient.

Problem:

> **"As the subject is radically free, process of Learning (*Bildung)* possible, but educational influence not possible - in principle."**

Makes teaching impossible to explain, as does constructivism!
(Descartes, Kant, Husserl)

04.12.2019

B. Relationalism =
"Intersubjectivity comes first"- approaches
(relationalism, Buber, Mead, Arendt, Bakhtin, life-world phenomenology)

1. Individuals may **only** establish themselves as <u>independent</u> and unique if there is something <u>already shared.</u>

2. An **intersubjective relation** is recognized as <u>*prior*</u> to the constitution of self-consciousness. Intersubjectivity is seen as:

   – **Language, Life-world, Praxis, Culture, History, Corporeality**

Problem:

   – **To the extent we *share* the world education seems superfluous (not necessary)!**

Is a "both-and" position possible?

- *Do we have to choose between two positions that make sense?*

- *Maybe not.*

- *But then we have to explain the dynamics between subjectivity-intersubjectivity!*

    = educational agency.

Educational agency

Three classic (modern) concepts for understanding *non-affirmative* educational work

1. **Recognition - Fichte, Hegel, Honneth, Taylor, Fraser**

   Refers to recognizing the Other's **potentiality** and **reality** on interpersonal, institutional and societal levels.

2a. **Summons to self-activity**

   (education as intervention, invitation, challenge)
   in a non-affirmative fashion
   - To identify the Bildungs*gehalt* in the Bildungs*inhalt*.

2b. "**Bildsamkeit**" (intentional learning, studying)
   The Other's intentional engagement in reflective practice.
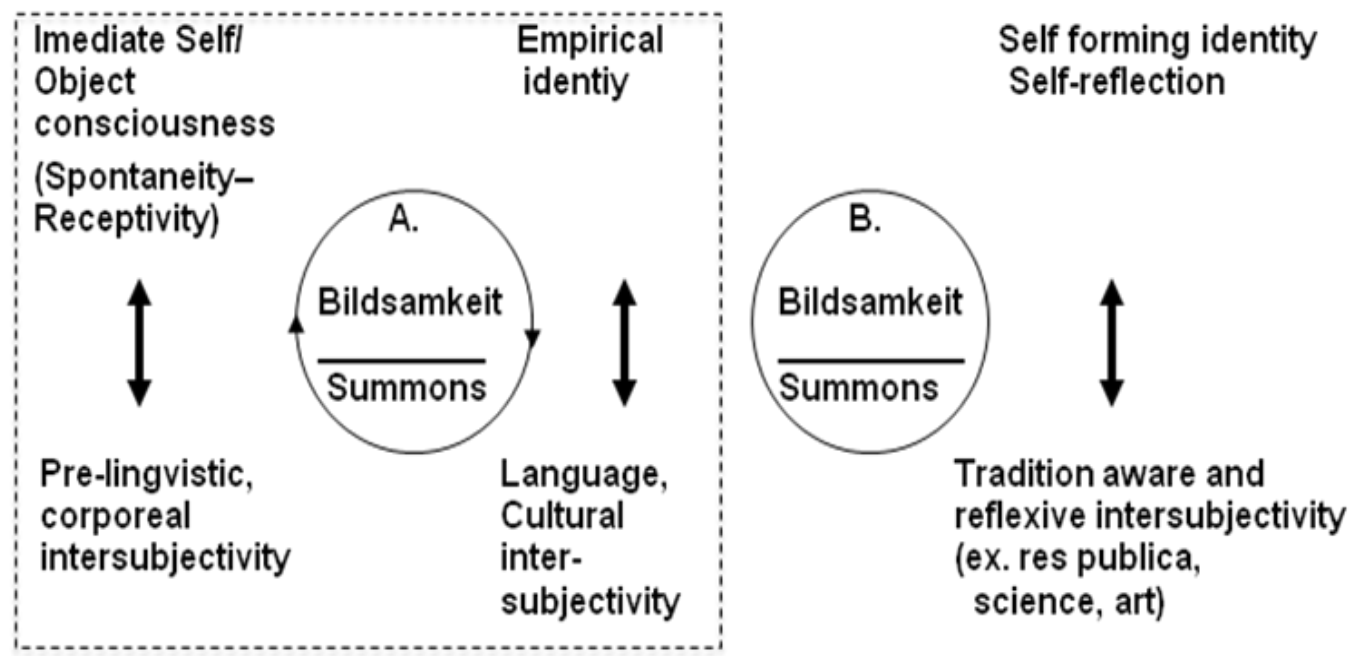
The three "births" of man

1. To the world	2. To the culture	3. To freedom

Imediate Self/ Object consciousness (Spontaneity– Receptivity)

Empirical identiy

Self forming identity Self-reflection

Subjectivity

A.

Bildsamkeit
―――
Summons

B.

Bildsamkeit
―――
Summons

Inter- subjectivity

Pre-lingvistic, corporeal intersubjectivity

Language, Cultural inter- subjectivity

Tradition aware and reflexive intersubjectivity (ex. res publica, science, art)

Recognition 1: Need for Care -Self-confidence Love	Recognition 2: To be seen as unique -Self-Esteem - Solidarity	Recognition 3: Mutual reconition of rights -Self-respect - Justice

Conclusion

The subject's empirical experience of autonomy/freedom (self-confidence, self-esteem, self-respect) is *intersubjectively mediated* through recognition and summoning the Other to self-activity (Bildsamkeit).

These classical concepts still powerful and relevant for TE.

The modern pedagogical paradox:

Benner: Education is to recognize and treat the Other *as if s/he already would be* capable of what s/he *may become capable of* through own activity.

Pedagogical interventions (eg. teaching or pedagogical leadership) is **only partly** an **intervention** in the **subject's** relation to a **subjectmatter (as often defined in Didaktik)**,

but rather an intervention in the learner's relation:
- to herself (I-Me)
- to others (I-You, I-We, We-You)
- to the world (I-It)

Education is to intervene in the subject's process of Bildung.

Pedagogical intervention is to 'artificially' work on selected cultural contents that meaningfully exemplify principled knowledge, to create *educative tensions* between the contents and Learner's intentions, experiences, values etc., so that the learner can reinvent her relations to herself, others, and the world.

Teaching is to gesture towards the **questions** to which existing knowledge is a possible answer.

The problem and a solution?

Particularist view: DIFFERENT theories → MULTI-disciplinarity
Universalist view: ONE theory for ANY policy translation/reform empty

Reproductionism vs Activism → Educational instrumenalism

The Non-Affirmative Alternative (NAT):

1) A General Theory valid for different levels of educational activity?
Yes, but not a universal theory.

NAT instead
a) proposes a *theory of the object* in question, i.e. what education is,
b) focuses *on the pedagogical dimensions of* policy translation,
curriculum work/reform, ed. leadership, etc.

2) By taking a normcritical stance NAT *avoids educational instrumentalism* that may follow both from reproductionism and activism. *Educational instrumentalism is counterproductive for preparing for participatory co-constructive citizenship in a political democracy.*

References

- Uljens, M. (2019). Entender el liderazgo educativo y la reforma curricular: más allá del economicismo global y el nacionalismo neoconservador (fue traducido por el Trad. y Prof. Lucas Damián Vini). In: C. Balagué (ed.), Desafíos para una educación emancipadora (pp. 173-197). Santa Fe, Argentina: Ministerio de Educación de la Provincia de Santa Fe. ISBN 978-987-1026-79-1 https://www.flacso.org.ar/publicaciones/desafios-para-una-educacion-emancipadora/

- Uljens, M. (2018). Understanding Educational Leadership and Curriculum Reform - Beyond global economism and neo-conservative nationalism. *Nordic Journal of Comparative and International Education (NJCIE)*, *2*(2-3), 196-213. https://doi.org/10.7577/njcie.2811

- Uljens, M. (2017). Att teoretisera pedagogikens relationer (Theorizing the relations of education). I: H. Sæverot & T. Werler (red.), *Pedagogikkens språk* (The Language of Education), (pp. 62-87). Oslo: Gyldendal.

- Uljens, M. & Ylimaki, R. (2017). Non-Affirmative Theory of Education as a Foundation for Curriculum Studies, Didaktik and Educational Leadership. In: M. Uljens & R. Ylimaki (Eds.), *Bridging Educational Leadership, Curriculum Theory and Didaktik - Non-Affirmative Theory of Education* (pp. 3-145). Cham: Springer. http://www.springer.com/us/book/9783319586489

- Uljens, M. (2015). Curriculum work as educational leadership - paradoxes and theoretical foundations. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, 1*(1), 22-31. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.3402/nstep.v1.27010

A Reflexive and Bildung Centered Process Modell for School Didactic

Politics - Culture - Economy

District and school level

1.

Context

School

Curriculum

Evaluation

Activity

Expe-rience

P3

2.
Teacher & Student

Intention

P1   P2 a   P2 b

E2 b   E2 a   E1

E3

Preunder-standing

Reflection

S1

Uljens, M. (1997). *School Didactics and Learning* (Psychology Press).