Original Article

Future jamming: Rhetoric of new knowledge in Finnish educational policy texts

Janne Säntti [ID]
Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Finland

Petteri Hansen
Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Finland

Antti Saari
Faculty of Education and Culture (EDU), Tampere University, Finland

Abstract

The future is rarely problematised in education even though it is self-evident in everyday school-work and present also in the management of education. However, we should understand how different future visions influence our understanding of education. In this paper, we apply rhetorical analysis and study how the future of education is rhetorically constructed in Finnish policy texts. Also, we analyze the special characteristic of Finnish future visions, which are based on the idea of Finnish education being top-notch. We focus explicitly on the idea of knowledge and its future relations in school education. In our data, the current school is rhetorically contrasted with the future one. This hastens the need to modernize Finnish school system. This view is reinforced by the needs of the economy and working life. Pathos is frequently used as a rhetorical strategy. Finns are warned about remaining in the past and obliged to change their education immediately. Future visions of Finnish education seem to be limited only to positive aspects.

Keywords

School education, policy documents, rhetorical analysis, future policies, knowledge

Corresponding author:
Janne Säntti, Faculty of Educational Sciences Helsinki, Finland Siltavuorenpenger 3a (PL 9) 00014 University of Helsinki
+358405583841.
Email: janne.santti@helsinki.fi

Introduction: School education, knowledge and the ambiguous future

Governing education in relation to the expected future of society is a global phenomenon. Visions of future schools are today presented by both national and supranational, public and private policy agencies (e.g. Forssell, 2015; Hansen et al., 2021). Unlike social theorists (Esposito, 2011; Rosa, 2013), educational researchers, despite some notable exceptions, seldom conceptualize or problematize the concept of the future. As Gough (1990) argues, possible futures in education are often 'tacit, token and taken for granted'. One reason for this taken-for-granted relation to the future might lie in the reflexivity between school education and the future. The future is omnipresent in the praxis and theory of school education: it is articulated as both an open future, in terms of the potential of people and societies to develop, but also as a closing and conditional future; something that is expected to happen as a consequence of our present actions. In this way, representations of the future may partially function as self-realizing fictions, as they enact futures that are predicted.

By problematizing time and observing the future as a question of expectations we also face the fact that the relationship between school education and the future is full of tensions. Firstly, school education has a particularly utopian outlook. While socializing younger generations for the norms, values, skills and knowledge of present society, school also tries to imagine a (still non-existent) future society, for which it tries to prepare its pupils. Within the purview of this double task, school education is exposed to a peculiar challenge. Society seems to be changing at a pace that makes it difficult to determine the needs and challenges that today's pupils will face as adults (Argenton, 2017). Another question is whether school education should look at the changes in its environment to forecast the future, and then adjust itself to fit this vision? Or should the school itself be considered an agent that produces still unrealized futures for the environment through educating young generations? This oscillation between external and internal futures creates a peculiar 'temporal topology' (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2009) in which various possible futures co-evolve. However, not all possible futures are equally likely. Some future trends and trajectories gain more attention than others and may become self-fulfilling prophecies (Esposito, 2011; Merton, 1948).

Different ways of framing the future shape both the idea of how we understand the purpose of schooling and the nature of the knowledge taught in school. Young and Muller (2010) (see also Young, 2014b; 2014c) present three different futures focusing explicitly on school knowledge. The first possible future, Future I, represents a future in which knowledge is given and fixed. This kind of knowledge is typically found in grammar or public schools' curricula and its subject divisions are based on those of academic disciplines. Knowledge is seen as repeatable and impersonal (Schiro, 2013). Future I represents an endeavour to continue a system originating in European elite school ideology, which has only lately been opened to the masses (Beare, 2001; Young, 2014a). In addition, the idea of repeatable, transmittable and impersonal knowledge is also emphasized by global, national and local assessment policies aiming to improve the measurable learning outcomes in specific school subjects such as mathematics, language and science.

Future II is the antithesis of Future I (Young and Muller, 2010; see also Young, 2014b, 2014c). In Future II, knowledge is constructed with reference to the particular needs, interests and experiences of learners. This tendency to concentrate on individual learning obscures the political and cultural contexts of knowledge. It is also seemingly neutral with

regard to the substance and objectives of education. Moreover, it deliberately questions the curriculum boundaries between subjects that are characteristic of Future I (Schiro, 2013).

Future III is based on the idea that some real social conditions must be accepted before knowledge can be produced, acquired or evaluated. Future III questions Future I for holding a static view of knowledge and Future II for its context-bound and individualistic view of knowledge. At the same time, Future III attempts to go beyond the experiences of learners and accept 'real' knowledge, which is anchored in social, economic and political issues (Young and Muller, 2010; see also Young, 2014b; 2014c).

Even though Young and Muller's (2010) ideas of different knowledge futures are helpful in pointing out different epistemic orientations, they are not without problems. First and foremost, it is difficult to imagine Futures I, II and III as separate entities, as in the real world these futures often blend. In other words, we find these three visions intentionally polarized. Second, even if Future I and Future II are understood as archetypes, it is not realistic to expect to witness the end of Future I and Future II anytime soon. It is more likely that different futures will continue to coexist, also in the future.

That said, the three futures of Young and Muller are actually discernible, and they reflect how education researchers position themselves in relation to alternative futures. Future III takes an observational position, and only makes sense if one first recognizes and is willing to accept the distinction between Futures I and II. From the Future I perspective, Future II does not exist – or it only exists as wishful thinking and has nothing to offer the praxis of teaching. As an anti-movement for Future I, Future II represents a new type of economy-relevance (Morgan, 2017) and a critique of traditional mass-schooling in post-industrial societies (Illich, 1971), both of which have gained attention among educational scientists, policymakers and economists since the 1970s. Future II is thus a commentary about Future I, and could be described as a form of *future jamming*. Similar to culture jamming, future jamming exploits the recognized forms of tradition, and by challenging them seeks to pinpoint new possible futures by means of rhetoric (Gardiner, 2017). From the Future II perspective, it is self-evident that Future I type knowledge will and should not apply in the future.

In this paper we focus on how future visions, resonating with the aforementioned Future II type of knowledge approach, are played out and used for jamming other futures in the Finnish policy rhetoric on future education and learning in Finnish schools. We are particularly interested in how policy rhetoric related to the Future II type of learning and knowledge is proclaimed in Finnish educational policy rhetoric, that is, in a small service economy that has been praised for its educational achievements and socially equal education system and its previous technological success stories (Saari & Säntti, 2018). We start our examination by focusing first on learning and knowledge in global education policy discourse, after which we focus on Finland's peculiar self-images in global education politics and how these shape the rhetoric of educational change in Finland.

Local reception of the global learning discourses in Finland

Young and Muller's Future II finds resonance in Gert Biesta's oft-cited characterization of 'learnification', a hegemonic trend in global educational policy and educational research discourses (Biesta 2010; 2012). Also called 'the new language of learning', this mode of discourse substitutes many of the former concepts of 'education', 'studying', 'edification', etc. with the term 'learning'. In this shift, students have become 'learners' who learn in

various 'learning environments' rather than in schools. Teachers are dubbed 'facilitators' or 'co-learners'. This has resulted in viewing education as a cognitive activity of the individual, thereby obfuscating the institutional, cultural and political contexts of education as learnification is prone to detaching education from its local frameworks. This new language has also affected how prevailing school institutions and education are jammed by being portrayed as suffering from old traditions such as teacher-centred activities or subject-based curricula. This juxtaposition of 'old' and 'new' provides solid ground for various rhetoric strategies (see also Simons and Masschelein, 2008).

Another consequence of this learnification has been the tendency to view education as an economic transaction: the learner is a potential customer for whom schools and teachers provide different educational commodities – knowledge, skills or competencies – the quality of which they are held accountable for (Biesta, 2005; 2010). This makes the new language of learning compatible with the dominant neoliberal policy discourses of major economic organizations such as the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank. This applies especially to the OECD, whose one central mission has been to rein in education systems in the service of economic production and whose activity from the very beginning has focused on enhancing technological innovations (Tröhler, 2014). Thus, after the turn of the millennium, education has become a solution for enhancing competitiveness in the labor market and for helping nations succeed as a 'knowledge society' in the global economy (Lauder et al., 2012).

Authoritative economy-driven visions of information societies and knowledge economies have delimited how futures can be thought about and acted upon. The discourses of information societies, or more recently knowledge economies, detach economic relations from their former localizations, and this also works as a unifying element in national economic and education policy rhetoric. As it places nations in competition against one another, it also leads to the idea that within nations, all citizens are seemingly in the same boat, sharing a common interest and destiny in the form of national competitiveness in a global theatre (Lauder et al., 2012). This in turn has produced rhetoric that exploits national characteristics, stories and beliefs.

Despite the global reach of policy discourses characterized by learnification and information/knowledge society rhetoric, the introduction and implementation of these policies requires local translation and adaptation. The local reception of global education policy flows, or glocalization, has been discussed under the concept of projections (Waldow and Steiner-Khamsi, 2019) and domestication (Alasuutari, 2009). While the projection approach highlights the importance of socio-historical self-images and narratives in the local reception of global policies, the domestication approach focuses on how new technologies and global policy flows are adopted and integrated as part of existing policies and practices. Once domesticated, new ideas and practices are no longer considered 'new' or 'strange' but a necessary and self-evident part of everyday life and language (Alasuutari, 2009; Silverstone, 1993).

The process of glocalization, however, is not purely about how to absorb ideas produced elsewhere; it is also about techniques of persuasion that seek to convince the local policy arena about the usefulness or naturalness of new ideas and technologies. Glocalization therefore involves not only translation but also transcreation, which more deeply utilizes the symbolic structures of local self-understanding. In order to make sense, new ideas must be introduced by using meanings that are already familiar and appealing to receptors. One should therefore pay close attention to such symbols and linguistic metaphors that are

especially important and powerful in local policy sensemaking. These can be more or less collectively shared stereotypes (Waldow and Steiner-Khamsi, 2019) as well as narrative constructions of historic events and characters (Hansen et al., 2020; Simola, 2015).

Discourses of information societies and knowledge economies have become mobilized in Finland, albeit in specific national circumstances. In the 1990s, when Finland suffered a deep economic recession due to the fall of the Soviet Union, policy discourses envisioned Finland as an 'information society' (Committee report, 1995; Committee report, 1997). This situation created an impetus to adjust education policies accordingly and to follow the principles of lifelong learning. Finland also invested heavily in information technology. Thus, Finland eagerly followed the OECD policy rhetoric to meet the challenges that the changing labor market posed (Rinne, 2008). At the turn of the new millennium, Finland became the chart-topper in OECD and World Economic Forum reports on the development of the information society in different countries (Nivala, 2009).

Another discursive trajectory in which Finland has traced transnational policy trends since the 1970s has been decontextualization, in which the socio-historical, cultural and institutional contexts of education have gradually disappeared from national curricula and pedagogical textbooks for teachers in a manner that finds resonance with aforementioned learnification (Simola, 2015). In this process, the mass character and compulsory nature of schooling have been omitted and replaced with imagery of individual learning processes, stripped of all social interaction.

In Finland, the processes of information society, decontextualization and learnification have all taken place in quite a peculiar way. As stated earlier, Finland has become a model country of education in the international educational policy arena, as has scored well in various rankings. This has certainly had an effect on how educational policy initiatives are framed in Finland. When changes to the educational system are suggested, the status as an international model system has to be acknowledged. So, the rhetoric tends to highlight the need to 'stay on top', to warn of the dangers of 'being left behind' by 'competitors' and the urge to make 'the best even better' (Saari and Säntti, 2018). It is this seductive and persuasive character of envisioning future knowledges in education that is the focus of this article.

Future visions of education in Finnish policy documents

Our data consist of policy documents that deal with the future visions of Finnish education. Some of them have the word 'future' (*tulevaisuus*) in their title. These documents usually focus clearly on the future of Finnish education, while others concentrate on issues such as digitalization or pedagogical reforms. However, these issues are overtly linked to the future speculation of the Finnish education system and its needs. These documents highlight the role of knowledge and technology in transforming future schools and societies.

We are interested in studying the future visions by formal or established sources, which have political, ideological or commercial power and intentions. In Finland, state committee institution, representing national interest groups and stakeholders, has been slowly replaced by local development and local policy networks. As a consequence, there is no single document by any parliamentary committee in our data. Although we excluded scientific texts from our data, some of our documents were written by academics. So, the variety of policy documents we examined expressed the views concerning the future education of not only government officials or interest group members, but also those of educational leaders and academics. In compiling our data set we limited our scope to material produced after 2010,

as the turn of the decade marked a clear threshold in the amount of explicitly future-oriented policy discourses. We argue that our data represent the key documents produced by aforementioned agencies.

We divided our data into three separate groups. First, there are documents initiated by the Finnish ministries and governmental agencies. These institutions plan, outline and implement within administrative branches and produce information for decision-making. The second set of data consists of publications by non-profit organizations like large cities', think tanks, foundations and the teacher's union. These kinds of actors usually have some particular reasons, like the special needs of a big city or trade union interests, for taking part in the discussion. The third set of data has been initiated by one international ICT company, which have explicit visions of the future school, especially in Finland. Our data are introduced in the reference section according to our three-part grouping.

Our original idea was to compare the rhetorical strategies in three different data groups. But after going through all 15 documents, we found that their agenda and rhetoric were surprisingly identical. Thus, we chose to analyze our data as one complete set, which represents the collective future vision of Finnish education. After this decision, we focused on the most persistent themes that emerge from our data. We also wanted to study Finnish self-image as an organizer of education, which in our view has some special features.

One recurrent theme in the documents was the juxtaposition of the prevailing school with the future school, which is rather a self-evident disposition when arguing for a change in the education system. However, rhetorical analysis gave us deeper insights into our data by explaining what kinds of rhetorical strategies are used in making this juxtaposition and how these views may contradict with other existing characterizations of Finnish education.

Rhetorical analysis

Rhetorical analysis does not offer explicit technique or procedures to follow. It is more like a toolbox than a clear-cut method for analyzing the strategies used to convince audiences. At the same time, rhetorical analysis provided us the medium to represent our data. So, it was a constant dialogue with our data during the writing process. In general, classical rhetoric is known for Aristotelian classification of three persuasive registers of addressing the audience. *Ethos* is about how a speaker can convince listeners that they have the authority to speak. *Logos* refers to the use of coherent reasoning and facts. The common strategy in logos is to apply research results or to use statistics. *Pathos* appeals to emotion and is a method for convincing the audience of an argument by arousing emotions, which hopefully serve the interests of the speaker (Aristotle, 1991; Gross, 1990). While analyses of educational policy discourses have long focused on the systems of reasoning and representations of authority, educational policy studies have recently begun to pay attention to how policy discourses and governance do not merely operate with cognitive content, but also, explicitly or implicitly, seek to stir up affective and emotional reactions (see e.g. Sellar, 2015). As such, this resonates with the recent 'affective turn' in social and cultural theory (see. e.g. Ahmed, 2014; Hoggett and Thompson, 2012).

Aristotle also introduces three persuasive discourses or oratories – forensic, epideictic and deliberative – which refer to different discourse settings. Forensic rhetoric establishes judgements of the past. As past-oriented, it is about justifying actions taken early. Epideictic rhetoric represents what is valuable and strives to raise mutual understanding of the value of an idea, proposal or person. It is also known as praise and blame speech and is present-

oriented. The third discourse, political or deliberative, is change-oriented and focuses on the future. The deliberative discourse is forward-looking and attempts to induce the audience to take some action (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971: 48–51; Winton, 2013).

Although the aforementioned classifications refer to speech types for different uses in Antiquity, they can be adapted to modern communication and policy texts. We primarily employ the ideas of 'new rhetoric' which can be seen as revitalization and reinterpretation of the classic rhetoric, but also as an attempt to broaden the scope of analysis to apply to all sorts of discourses and audiences (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971; Van Eemeren et al., 2014). The use of rhetorical strategies is crucial in open societies, in which policies are not executed by fiat in centralized, authoritarian rule, but require legitimation from public assent.

In rhetorical communication, the task of the speaker is to define the audience to whom one is speaking, and to acknowledge its existing beliefs and values in relation to the topic, as premises that can be built on when trying to convince it (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971: 23–26). Then, after the audience has been introduced to these premises, or starting points, the idea of argumentation is to move the acceptance of the audience from these premises to the conclusion (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971: 65–115).

The common starting point of rhetorical strategies is to present the premises to an audience and expect that listeners or viewers accept them. These premises deal with the reality or the preferable. Reality-based premises are facts, truths and presumptions. A typical fact is a single statement that is considered uncontroversial and widely approved. Truths are more complex systems, like scientific knowledge, and are usually based on multiple facts. Presumption is about what is taken as normal or likely. The preferable contains ideals, values, and their hierarchies. Values are regarded as commanding universal assent, and hierarchies are used to order values or valued objects in relation to one another, like 'man is above animal'. The loci of the preferable is a kind of storehouse for arguments when seeking the adherence of the audience (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971: 65–115, Van Eemeren et al., 2014).

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1971: 77–78) divide values into abstract and concrete. Abstract values, such as freedom and justice, have no clear connection to the means, institutions or practices that serve them. They lack a clear meaning and referent but are still very 'meaningful', as they are lauded as unifying centrepieces of a community. Abstract values might also lose their power when defined more precisely (Van Eemeren et al., 2014): they immediately create lines of division as to which precise definition of freedom or equality really captures the universal characteristic of the term (Perelman, 1982).

Concrete values highlight living beings, groups, objects and institutions – such as Finland, the family or the school – as valuable in themselves. As such, they are prone to highlighting the achievements and hallmarks of a society, whereas abstract values tend to have a more utopian character, referring to ideals not yet fully realized (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1971, 78–79). This is why abstract values are often drawn upon when trying to convince the audience of the need for a decisive change, and concrete values are referred to in conservative rhetoric that seeks to uphold existing traditions (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971: 79).

In this paper we employ rhetorical analysis to study persuasive strategies and how the audience is induced to support these ideas. We have two research questions. We want to

> ...examine how the future of education is rhetorically characterized in Finnish policy texts and how possible scenarios frame and reconstruct the idea of school knowledge and its future relations in education, while jamming other possible knowledge futures.

...focus on the special characteristics and the role of Finnish education in framing the future school.

The current, the hoped-for and some national characteristics

First, we study how the prevalent school is juxtaposed with the future school in Finnish policy discourses. Here, we concentrate on more general considerations of the state of our schools located in knowledge societies. In the next phase, we focus on the rhetoric that is characteristic of Finnish policy discourses.

The reality: Outdated and cloistered school

In our data, statements about the current situation of education are the initial premises assumed to be accepted by the audience. The main premise can be condensed into the claim that the existing school, as it is, is old-fashioned in that its pedagogical practices are obsolete in relation to the needs and demands of knowledge society. Instead, its conception of knowledge is characteristic of the needs of the industrial society of the past, when people were educated for clear-cut jobs. The problem seems to revolve around the subject-based curriculum. It is insinuated that learning school subjects usually involves useless facts and repetitive memorization of specific content knowledge. The behaviourist approach, with its one-way transmission pedagogy, is intrinsically connected to subject-based teaching and learning (Young, 2014a). In some utterances, it is the whole idea of something that is already fixed, often in the form of school subjects or thematic entities rather than general skills, that is considered problematic.

> *Purely subject-based thinking, although the new curriculums have tried to dismantle it, leads swiftly to the knowledge acquired during the school years becoming detached from reality, which will have a radical effect on motivation. Acquiring mere facts will not enable people to solve complex, multidisciplinary problems.* (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015: 78)

This state of affairs is depicted, not with reference to academic research on prevailing pedagogical practices or changes in the labour market, but through a selection of vivid illustrations that construct a scene that highlights certain characteristics of the school system, while obfuscating others. In rhetoric, illustrations can be used to strengthen adherence to already established beliefs (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971: 357–362). In our data, prominent illustrations are, among others, vignettes that describe the boring reality of classrooms in which teachers hold unquestioned authority and pupils sit behind their desks withering away, memorizing arduous textbook knowledge they will never need in real life (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2010; Sitra, the Finnish Innovation Fund, 2015). Whatever is given tangible presence this way already creates a sense of reality and importance in the audience (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971: 116–118).

These examples highlight that knowledge taught in the current school is only useful in a narrow school context. The starting point, or the very idea of such education, is not future needs or students' wishes, but the insular demands of the school system. Moreover, school knowledge is also unnatural in relation to how pupils learn, and it differs from how knowledge is produced and used outside school. Consequently, it is also incapable of meeting

future needs. From single facts or presumptions, such as that school knowledge is useless or tuition is based on the repetition of facts, a kind of truth of the current school being irretrievably outdated ensues. The use of illustrations to establish the premises of argumentation do not operate as a means to merely secure authority and cognitive assent in the registers of ethos and logos, but also to create an emotional attunement typical of pathos. It seeks to evoke a sense of frustration or even anger at the current state of the school system. This in turn is thought to arouse a desire to do something about it.

The preferable: The school as it should be

When describing the preferred state of future schools in Finland, documents often employ abstract values. They are used not only to acknowledge common aims; they also stir up an emotional charge that will spur the audience to act. Documents mention individuality, creativity and freedom as values widely recognized in the Finnish knowledge society. Yet allegedly this is not the case in schools, which are still organized according to structures of mass production, i.e. the same contents and methods for everyone. This way, the premises focusing on reality are connected to those of the preferable. Next, to demonstrate the preferable in more detail we consider some presented values.

> *From the perspective of tasks with no notes, future education should strive to advance two interlocking factors: creativity and entrepreneurship*. (Confederation of Finnish Industries, 2011: 14).

The image of having no notes while working alludes to the idea of jazz improvisation as an example of future work (Confederation of Finnish Industries, 2011). Thus, the model workers of the future are, rather curiously, jazz musicians. They do not merely mechanically play the saxophone and are not restricted to music sheets but are playful and capable of improvising with their bandmates. Time after time, our data mentioned uncertainty, inconstancy and 'wicked problems' as being the characteristics of the future society or work in the long term (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015: 17–18). The pathos register is used to represent the reactions to these challenges as exhilarating forms of learning and innovating. In tackling these uncertainties and problems, the answer is to accept the idea of 'no notes' and embrace the unexpected. This image also calls for students to throw away their notes (curriculum and textbooks) and seduces them to play like a freewheeling musician. In this process and state of flow, learners can then embody the values of creativity and entrepreneurship. This imagery stands in stark contrast to the idea of Future I and the image of the outdated Finnish school, where knowledge is seen as a matter that can be amassed and as retaining its value in the future. In the future, no amount of subject knowledge in, for example, history or geography alone can serve the needs of society. It is rather general skills, mindsets and attunements such as creativity and flexibility that can enable individuals to adapt to different situations. Here, Finnish educational policy documents trace similar characteristics to the rhetoric of the OECD and the EU (Simons and Masschelein, 2008; Decuypere and Simons, 2020).

Another emphasized value is child-centeredness. Here, the attention is directed towards the empirical world of children and their individual interests. One solution is phenomenon-based learning, in which the starting point of teaching is not disciplinary knowledge but the way the world appears to the student via everyday phenomena, and how these phenomena could be approached holistically. Phenomenon-based learning is said to provide a natural

way of learning and connection to real-life problems, which isolated school subjects cannot arrange. Besides pupil's experience, this cross-disciplinary and phenomenon-based approach promises to bring learners' skills and the surrounding society to the forefront in the learning process (Finnish Parliament, 2013: 35; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015: 78).

The next preferable value deals with knowledge and how it is managed in education. In the hierarchical view it is essential to separate knowledge acquisition from knowledge production. The latter is presented as the superior.

> *In addition to acquiring, managing, applying and evaluating knowledge, the ability to produce knowledge and media is an increasingly paramount skill for the future*. (Microsoft, 2017a: 90).

The real additional value comes when new knowledge is actually produced and as it emerges in and from learning situations. This is inconsistent with ideas of 'complete knowledge' found in our data as 'all knowledge is already on the internet' (Sitra, the Finnish Innovation Fund, 2015: 8) or 'transported in each and everyone's pocket' (Sitra, the Finnish Innovation Fund, 2015: 4). Another key point is the collective nature of knowledge production. It seems that knowledge collectively produced by peer groups never shares the same questionable qualities as knowledge acquired through teachers' tuition. Thus, it is better if something is learned from your peers or co-learners than taught by the teacher. Networks, known for openness and agility, seem to epitomize this social knowledge production, as we are already living in a 'learning, network-like innovation society' (Finnish Parliament, 2013, p. 104). Learning is not restricted to school as our society is a large learning web in which learning never stops. Networks are also a good vehicle for promoting learnification. As learners have the control, the role of the teacher is to stay at a distance (Biesta, 2012). In the wildest visions, learners are the sole survivors of deschooling, as schools are demolished and replaced by various networks and learning villages operating in a spontaneous, non-hierarchical fashion (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010: 24-25; Sitra, the Finnish Innovation Fund, 2015: 8).

The school needs to change

The purpose of argumentation is to present premises to an audience and to expect the audience to accept them. We introduced a few premises that address the reality and the preferable. According to our analysis, the documents unequivocally share the conclusion that present education is in crisis and should swiftly be reorganized according to the ideas of what Biesta calls learnification (2010) and Young and Muller (2010) call Future II in order to meet the demands of the future.

When premises, whether truths or values, lose their position as a starting point and become conclusions, the following argumentation and conclusions will be inoperative and unsuccessful (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971: 68; Van Eemeren et. al., 2014). So, is it probable that the audience will accept those premises? Or the conclusion that Finnish schools must be changed thoroughly? Of course, the context must be acknowledged. When considering this, it is good to remember that Finnish education, from comprehensive schools to teacher education, is famous for being first class. In addition, Finnish education is said to offer equal opportunities to pupils irrespective of socioeconomic status or geographical distance (Rautalin and Alasuutari, 2007; Sahlberg, 2011; Simola, 2015).

Argumentation, when accommodated in the frame of reference of the audience, is dependent on whether the audience is universal or has some special characteristic (Perelman and

Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971: 28–40; Van Eemeren et. al., 2014). Here, we content ourselves with stating that in our documents the audience should be understood as having more universal features than special ones. Thus, some arguments dealing with school might be more acceptable than others, and neither totally acceptable nor unacceptable by any means. It is also quite clear that the premises may be more acceptable for some members of the audience, or audiences, than for others.

When contrasting current Finnish education with the desired future school, the documents use quasi-logical argumentation. The idea is to create an illusion that mimics the reasoning of closed and systematic disciplines like mathematics or logic. To be more precise, the argumentation is based on confrontation and incompatibility, which coerces the audience into choosing between two alternatives that cannot, in rhetoric, exist simultaneously. (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971: 195–204; Van Eemeren et al., 2014) There is also another contradiction. The premises dealing with reality limn the characteristics of the present school system in terms of the rest of the society, and the premises of the preferable are used to make the audience see a decisive incompatibility between the school in its current state and the universally shared values of Finnish society.

Finland as a forerunner in education

Next, we turn to the special characteristics of the discussion on Finnish education and employ the Aristotelian ideas of persuasive appeals and discourses. As seen before, Finnish educational policy rhetoric shares similar traits of characterizing the problems of the current school system and its ways of understanding knowledge as global policy discourses. Yet, as rhetorical strategies create context-specific exigencies and assumptions, there are differences, at least in how rhetoric is used. In our data, the authors often referred to the exceptional situation of Finnish education. They also used concrete rather than abstract values, so as to pay respect to the vaunted Finnish success story in, for example, PISA:

> In proportion to its size, Finland is huge in terms of education, and a globally well -known forerunner. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015: 17).

Although recognizing what has already been achieved might easily buttress a conservative approach to protecting traditions, Finnish future rhetoric turns this approach upside down, highlighting the dangers of complacency. This setting is frequent: the thing is not to be lulled into believing that the established status remains the same or that it has already vanished.

> For a long time, we have ridden the crest of the PISA hysteria wave and convinced ourselves that our schools are great. We do have excellent schools, but they are outdated. They are not schools for either today or the future. (Sitra, the Finnish Innovation Fund, 2015: 4)

Finnish schools and teachers have a high degree of autonomy, which means that strong rhetorical strategies must be employed in order to create a willingness to implement much needed reforms. In doing so, all three Aristotelian discourses are used to varying degrees. As our documents are about the future of education and the view is focused on the upcoming, the political or deliberative discourse is dominant. This could also be seen earlier when the preferable premises were introduced. Nevertheless, epideictic speech often precedes political and change-oriented discourse. This can be seen when the 'world's best teachers' are praised

and at the same time blamed for living in the past (Saari and Säntti, 2018). Although this setting is controversial, the strategy is to create agreement among the audience. Forensic speech is also often utilized when the past of Finnish education is applauded. In the next quotation, all discourses are employed as the author is looking back as well as forward in order to create consensus in the audience.

> *Because of our investments in education, our skilled engineers first developed the forest industry and then created information and communication technology. And they will keep on developing new successful lines of businesses for us, as long as we take care of our education.* (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2010: 64–65)

The same kind of awareness of being a pioneer in ICT and digital services binds Finland to stay at the forefront of this progress (Ministry of Transport and Communications, 2011: 11). These two lines, education and technology often meet in the future visions. In the use of concrete values, the register of pathos bears much weight. First of all, it is discernible in the form of evoking pious feelings towards the Finnish system:

> *One could say that Finns have a sacred relationship with education.* (Finnish Parliament, 2013: 5)

This shows not only an abstract value of excellence, but a concrete value (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971: 163–164), as it insists on a certain tradition that should be sustained, even amidst a reform. This also means tapping into well-worn imageries of the sacred value of education for Finns as a way of creating communion among the imagined audience. Yet, on the other hand, and in tune with the epideictic structure of praise and blame, an alarmist rhetoric also seeks to evoke feelings of fear and anxiety over losing these highly revered things, unless they are constantly nurtured.

Conclusion

We have introduced how the future of education and its prominent forms of school knowledge are rhetorically constructed in Finnish policy texts. We found reality-based premises that considered Finnish school outdated and isolated in relation to the needs of the knowledge society. The rhetoric included illustrations of arduous schoolwork and subject-based reality laced with strong emotions typical of pathos. Consequently, this kind of school is incapable of meeting future needs, which in turn are infused with preferable values such as individuality, creativity, freedom and network-like activity with collective and local knowledge production. These kinds of interest are well-known in global educational policies and our documents urged swift and major reforms in Finnish education according to the principles of Future II and learnification (Biesta, 2010; Young and Muller, 2010).

As well as sharply contrasting the current school with the future one, pathos is used as leverage to oblige Finns to close ranks in the face of the global development of education. This, in turn, hastens the urge to modernize Finnish schools. When operating with pathos, Finnish readers are intimidated by the possibility of becoming stuck in the past school. Finally, after warnings are issued and last-minute opportunities presented, promises follow and readers are lured into believing that the future school is very different. The inherent problems of mass education (such as motivation problems or school well-being) will be conquered if we just dare to change our system. Abstract values such as openness, creativity,

individuality and innovativeness, which usually arouse positive images and emotions, are presented as inherent features of the future school. Having no plan (curriculum) to describe what should be done, no structure (school organization including teaching staff) to conduct teaching, and no restrictions, only pure possibilities, sounds like the famous cases of the true innovators of Silicon Valley, who changed the world. According to the analyzed rhetoric, this untamed, self-organized design of exceptional individuals and unique events can be transplanted to meet the needs of mass education day after day.

The needs of working life and the economy are reiterated as fundamental reasons for the change in education. This view clearly reflects education as a means to an end, not a vanguard for envisioning and enabling new futures. One could also ask whether political participation, civic activity or democratic (life) skills will be important any longer in the future. The future is not tied to welfare or civic society, for which Finland is famous. In our data, schools are merely reactionary institutions that cannot and should not have active agency in imagining futures. Yet, the probable tension between pupils' and society's needs are not discussed when knowledge is cleansed of political, economic and social connections. Our findings support Forssell's (2015) notes on economic-driven future school narratives, which discuss the goals of future education in terms of adaptability, entrepreneurial spirit and innovative citizens.

Finnish rhetoric has some special characteristics based on the Finnish relation to education and its alleged special status in educational policy. The setting is controversial as 'the best school in the world' is shamefully outdated (Saari and Säntti 2018). At the same time, Finnish municipalities, schools and individual teachers possess a high degree of autonomy in deciding how to implement the curriculum (Sahlberg, 2011; Saari et al., 2014). This means that policy initiatives have to employ rhetorical strategies that persuade different actors in the field to take up initiatives without an official decree (Saari and Säntti, 2018). In this peculiar situation, future rhetoric is harnessed to deal with educational policy for future needs as Finns domesticate (Alasuutari, 2009) the ideas of learnification and Future II.

Despite the varying actors and interests behind our documents, they are identical in that they portray the future of Finnish education. Future visions also possess, almost without exception, positive prospects. The only exception in our documents is the Future Comprehensive school report (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015), which also included alternative future visions and concerns about students' well-being and educational equity. Naturally, in our data some visions are more cautious whereas others claim that the structures of current mass education should be completely changed. We expected that ICT companies may have rather different visions to, say, parliamentary or ministerial sources. The possibility to speak out, which has followed from the foundation of different think tanks and the diminution of committee institutions, has not produced alternative future visions and thus, has not broadened the discussion on the future of education.

As well as the content of futures, one should also think about the function of future school rhetoric preferring future emergencies, improvised learning and teaching solutions, instead of time-tested contents and pre-fixed teaching methods. It might be that the education system as a forerunner of modern society has to constantly find new ways to renew itself in order to avoid the impression that it is merely a repetitive machine of modernity. In this sense, a future school that jams with knowledge is also open to the future – and itself. Indeed, policy documents highlighting the importance of flexibility and jamming-like knowledge constructions in schools are exploiting the positive side of openness by falling silent of current educational problems. The questions of how to deal with compulsory education and mass education are not on their 'set list'.

Another way to look at the future of education comes from an alternative meaning of the word 'jamming'. As already pointed out in the introduction, jamming also means interference of communication. In organization studies, Dirk Baecker (2011) writes about interference (*Störung*) as a form of steering (*Steuerung*). The future visions analyzed in this paper are not supposed to give any concrete suggestions as to what knowledge is and how to deal with the future; they are steering documents written to provoke and irritate the practitioners of education. By denying the most logical answer and requiring the respondent to present educational problem solutions alternatively, they are a form of interference or communicational jamming. By doing so, not only do they admit the autonomy of the Finnish teacher and school authorities, they also set expectations that this autonomy should be used for constant renewing of teaching and learning practices. This communicational jamming is not happening only within national institutions, but it has first and foremost a global dimension as well. Reflecting the recent OECD (2018) publications on education and the future, global policy-makers seldom present the future as known but rather use it as a rhetorical device, a reference point (Waldow and Steiner-Khamsi 2019) to address the local education organizers about the necessity to adapt to a forever changing global world situation.

Our data represent established and official agencies, which are central authorities when envisioning the future policies of Finnish education. However, as our documents are not binding, but rather persuasive, it is impossible to analyze how these documents are received by different actors – and if they are familiar with them at all. We can only guess whether local school developers share these visions or whether taxpayers are demanding a new kind of school because of these documents. To better understand how transformative our documents are, other data sources and studies are needed. After all, our analysis consolidates that educational discourse does not problematize or see the future as having contradictory interests (Gough 1990). The presented future has a clear and common vision, which is strengthened by emotive rhetoric and assumptions that the hoped-for future is collectively shared. Or should we just endorse this future as it is presented by so many established agencies without opposition? We do take our documents seriously but, in the future, as researchers we would like to study the divergent and innovative (a value which was repeatedly mentioned in our data) discussion on the future of Finnish education.

Research data

Ministries and governmental agencies

Finnish National Agency for Education (2010) *Koulu 3.0*. Helsinki: Opetushallitus.

Finnish Parliament (2013) Uusi oppiminen. Eduskunnan tulevaisuusvaliokunnan jul-kaisu 8/2013. Available at: https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/naineduskuntatoimii/julkaisut/Documents/tuvj_8 + 2013.pdf (accessed 9 June 2020).

Ministry of Education and Culture (2010) *Koulutuksen tietoyhteiskuntakehittäminen 2020. Parempaa laatua, tehokkaampaa yhteistyötä ja avoimempaa vuorovaikutusta.* Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön työryhmämuistioita ja selvityksiä 2010: 12. Available at: http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/75547/okmtr12.pdf?sequence = 1(accessed 9 June 2020).

Ministry of Education and Culture (2015) *Tulevaisuuden peruskoulu.* Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön julkaisuja 2015:8. Available at: http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/75121/okm8.pdf?sequence = 1&isAllowed = y (accessed 9 June 2020).

Ministry of Education and Culture (2016) *Uusi peruskoulu-ohjelma. Oppijalähtöisyys, osaa-vat opettajat ja yhteisöllinen toimintakulttuuri.* Available at: https://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4583171/Uusi + peruskoulu + -ohjelma + %289.9.2016%29 (accessed 9 June 2020).

Ministry of Education and Culture (2019) *Uusi peruskoulu -kärkihanke 2016-2018 loppur-aportti.* available at: http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161383/6-2019-Digiajan%20peruskoulu_.pdf (accessed 9 June 2020).

Ministry of Transport and Communications (2010) *Kansallinen tieto- ja viestintätekniikan opetuskäytön suunnitelma.* Available at: http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/78193 (accessed 9 June 2020).

Ministry of Transport and Communications (2011) *Tuottava ja uudistuva Suomi: Digitaalinen agenda vuosille 2011–2020.* Valtioneuvoston selonteko eduskunnalle. Available at: http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/78142 (accessed 9 June 2020).

Non-profit organizations

City of Helsinki Board of Education (2015) Ilmiömäinen Helsinki. Tulevaisuuden koulun suuntaviivat 2015–2020. Helsinki: Opetusvirasto. Available at: http://www.hel.fi/static/opev/virasto/opevsivut/tk-2015.pdf (accessed 9 June 2020).

Confederation of Finnish Industries (2011). Oivallus-loppuraportti. Available at: https://ek.fi/wp-content/uploads/Oivallus_loppuraportti.pdf (accessed 9 June 2020).

Foundation for Municipal Development sr. (2016) Pulpetista tablettiin: suomalainen koulu edelläkävijäksi maailman muutoksessa. Kunnallisalan kehittämissäätiö. Polemia-sarjan julkaisuja 102. Available at: https://kaks.fi/julkaisut/pulpetista-tablettiin-suomalai nen-koulu-edellakavijaksi-maailman-muutoksessa/ (accessed 9 June 2020).

Sitra, the Finnish Innovation Fund (2015) *Maa jossa kaikki rakastavat oppimista.* Uusi koulutus -foorumi. Available at: https://www.sitra.fi/julkaisut/Muut/Maa_jossa_kaikki_rakastavat_oppimista.pdf (accessed 9 June 2020).

Trade Union of Education in Finland (2016) *Askelmerkit digiloikkaan.* OAJ:n julkaisu-sarja 3:2016. Available at: http https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/julkaisut/2016/oajn-askel merkit-digiloikkaan/ (accessed 9 June 2020).

ICT sector

Microsoft (2017a) *Tie laaja-alaiseen osaamiseen.* Available at: http://ele.fi/assets/arviointi kehikko_microsoft_170605.pdf (accessed 9 June 2020).

Microsoft (2017b) *Tulevaisuuden oppiminen. Eväitä osaamisen seuraavalla vuosisadalle*. Available at: https://pulse.microsoft.com/uploads/prod/2018/06/tulevaisuuden-oppiminen_kirjanen.pdf (accessed 9 June 2020).

ORCID iD

Janne Säntti 🆔 https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2624-9069

References

Ahmed S (2004) *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
Alasuutari P (2009) The domestication of worldwide policy models. *Ethnologia Europaea*, 39(1): 66–71.
Argenton G (2017) Update yourself: Learning to forget in the knowledge society. *Knowledge Cultures* 5(2): 18–31.
Aristotle (1991) *The Art of Rhetoric*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Baecker D (2011) *Organisation und Störung*. Aufsätze. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
Beare H (2001) *Creating the Future School*. London: Routledge Falmer.
Biesta G (2005) Against learning. Reclaiming a language for education in an age of learning. *Nordisk Pedagogik* 25(1): 54–66.
Biesta G (2010) *Good Education in an Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
Biesta G (2012) Giving teaching back to education: Responding to the disappearance of the teacher. *Phenomenology & Practice* 6(2): 35–49.
Committee of educational planning (1995). *Elinikäinen oppiminen tietoyhteiskunnassa. I osamietintö*. Helsinki: Komiteanmietintö 13.
Committee of educational planning (1996). *Elinikäinen oppiminen tietoyhteiskunnassa. II osamietintö*. Helsinki: Komiteanmietintö 14.
Decuypere M and Simons M (2020) Pasts and presents that keep the possible alive: Reflections on time, space, education and governing. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. Epub ahead of print 23 January 2020.
Esposito E (2011) *The Future of Futures*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
Forssell A (2015) School and the future: How teachers and teacher education are articulated in the political debate. *Policy Futures in Education* 13(6): 712–731.
Gardiner S (2017) Futures loss, despair and empowerment work in the University of Vechta: An action research project. In: Wals A and Blaze-Corcoran P (eds) *Envisioning Futures for Environmental and Sustainability Education*. Wageningen: Wageningen University Press, 243–256.
Gough N (1990) Futures in Australian education—tacit, token and taken for granted. *Futures* 22(3): 298–310.
Hansen P, Sivesind K and Thostrup R (2021, in press.) Managing expectations by projecting the future school: Observing the Nordic Future School Reports via Temporal Topologies. The European Educational Research Journal.
Hansen P, Wallenius T, Juvonen S and Varjo J (2020) Moving landscapes of Nordic basic education: Approaching shifting international influences through the narratives of educational experts. *Compare*, 50(6): 773–791.
Hoggett P and Thompson S (2012) *Politics and the Emotions – The Affective Turn in Contemporary Political Studies*. New York: Continuum.
Illich I (1971) *Deschooling Society*. London: Calder & Boyars.
Lauder H, Young M, Daniels H, Balarin M and Lowe J (2012) Introduction. In: Lauder H, Young M, Daniels H, Balarin M and Lowe J (eds) *Educating for the Knowledge Economy?: Critical Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 1–24.

Merton R (1948) The self-fulfilling prophecy. *The Antioch Review* 8(2): 193–210.

Nivala M (2009) Simple answers for complex problems: Education and ICT in Finnish information society strategies. *Media, Culture & Society* 31(3): 433–448.

OECD (2018) *The Future of Education and Skills: Education 2030, The Future We Want*. Paris: Author.

Perelman C (1982) *The Realm of Rhetoric*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Perelman C and Olbrechts-Tyteca L (1971) *The New Rhetoric*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame press.

Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos A (2009) *Niklas Luhmann: Law, Justice, Society*. London: Routledge.

Rautalin M and Alasuutari P (2007) The curse of success: The impact of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment on the discourses of the teaching profession in Finland. *European Educational Research Journal* 6(4): 348–363.

Rinne R (2008) The growing supranational impacts of the OECD and the EU on national educational policies, and the case of Finland. *Policy Futures in Education* 6(6): 665–680.

Rosa H (2013) *Social Acceleration: A Theory of Modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Saari A Salmela S and Vilkkilä J (2014) Governing autonomy: Subjectivity, freedom, and truth in Finnish curriculum discourse. In Pinar W (ed) *Handbook of International Research in Curriculum –* 2nd edition. New York: Taylor & Francis, 183–200.

Saari A and Säntti J (2018). The rhetoric of the 'digital leap' in Finnish educational policy documents. *European Educational Research Journal* 17(3): 442–457.

Sahlberg P (2011) *Finnish Lessons*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Schiro M (2013) *Curriculum Theory: Conflicting Visions and Enduring Concerns*. 2nd edn. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Sellar S (2015) A feel for numbers: Affect, data and education policy. *Critical Studies in Education* 56(1): 131–146.

Simola H (2015) *The Finnish Education Mystery: Historical and Sociological Essays on Schooling in Finland*. London: Routledge.

Simons M and Masschelein J (2008) From schools to learning environments: The dark side of being exceptional. *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 42(3–4): 687–704.

Tröhler D (2014) Change management in the governance of schooling: The rise of experts, planners, and statistics in the early OECD. *Teachers College Record* 116(9): 13–26.

Waldow F (2017) Projecting images of the 'good' and the 'bad school': Top scorers in and educational large-scale assessments as reference societies. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative International Education* 47(5): 647–664.

Waldow F and Steiner-Khamsi G (eds) (2019) *Understanding PISA's Attractiveness: Critical Analyses in Comparative Policy Studies*. London: Bloomsbury.

Van Eemeren FH, Garssen B, Krabbe EC, Snoeck Henkemans FA, Verheij B & Wegemans JHM (2014) *Handbook of Argumentation Theory*. Dordrecht: Springer Reference.

Winton S (2013) Rhetorical analysis in critical policy research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 26(2): 158–177.

Young M (2014a) Knowledge, curriculum and the future school. In: Young M and Lambert D (eds) *Knowledge and the Future School. Curriculum and Social Justice*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 9–40.

Young M (2014b) Why start with the curriculum. In: Young M and Lambert D (eds) *Knowledge and the Future School. Curriculum and Social Justice*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 41–64.

Young M (2014c) Powerful knowledge as a curriculum principle. In: Young M and Lambert D (eds) *Knowledge and the Future School. Curriculum and Social Justice*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 65–88.

Young M and Muller J (2010) Three educational scenarios for the future: lessons from the sociology of knowledge. *European Journal of Education* (45)1, Part 1: 11–27.

Biographies

Janne Säntti is a university lecturer in pedagogical studies for adult education in the University of Helsinki, and associate professor in educational sciences. His main research interests include Finnish teacher education in post-war Finland, especially the formation of academic teacher education in Finland. He is also interested in digitalisation and rhetoric analysis.

Petteri Hansen is a postdoctoral researcher in the University of Helsinki. His research interests include comparative education, politics of time and systems theory.

Antti Saari is an assistant professor in Tampere University Faculty of Education and Culture. His main research interests include history and philosophy of education and curriculum studies.