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Building inter-agency network for integrated implementation of education policy at regional level

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Introduction.

We present a study on policy of education modernisation in one county, which is part of a larger strategy of inclusive education in Estonia. This policy of inclusive education was triggered by UNESCO, European Commission and disseminated by The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. This was a kind of new policy formation which is targeted not on efficiency effects of a policy, but is aimed to provide public capacity which fits best to the individual dispositions and abilities of potential citizens and employees. We draw on the newest theories of interactive and transactive (Dewey) policy process, which turned different methodologies of post-structuralism to the angle of pragmatist and practice focused policy analysis (Nicolini 2012), and on conceptions of critical dialogue of policy design (Forester 2012, Wagenaar 2013). The main challenge of this type of policies is a need for extensive discretion of local actors in building governance networks which intersect traditional government and sectoral patterns at the local/county space. This need emerged at a time when, vice versa, the strengthening of traditional centralized pattern of government had revived since Estonia gained EU membership.

We carried out the applied research project in cooperation with Rapla County Local Authorities' Association (RCLAA) in 2019-2020, during which local actors started to work out network type arrangements in order to meet challenges that the policy of inclusive education, even in its rather restrained form (as enabling access to specialised support services for children and youth with special needs), triggered. This was actually an entrance into rather new and complex terrain of *new governance* arrangements not only in sense of multilevel governance (roles on different tiers in the policy process) but also as open governance of actors in local/ county space. These arrangements in Heideggers world must be dwelled on (not build up) not on a topographic *logic of place*, but on the relational (topological) logic of local/ regional space (see Murhoch 2006, Biao Xiang 2013[1]). This means patterns across local authorities' and agencies' jurisdictions as well involvement of actors with rather controversial practical cognitive frames in the field of basic education; and also, the intersection with other governance fields (vocational training, business environment at county level, recreation, community safety, employment opportunities etc.)

Although we were equipped with new conceptual and research instruments, this consultancy resulted - despite a rather enthusiastic involvement of local leaders into this innovation project – with *minor results* due to the lack of experience (basically *know how*) in building up those complex networks. We can also state that we faced with classical wicked issue (Rittel 1972), which needs profoundly *processual approach* to organizing (see Chia, Tsoukas 2006) and its design (Weick 2003), and therefore cannot be tamed by traditional instruments of engineering-implementing policy plans. Nevertheless, main actors were able to perceive the needs and threats to a new education policy paradigm, and were able to develop the County Education Council consisting of actors from RCLAA. However, this educational innovation seems a rather challenging in Estonian soil. We could talk about the possibility of changing the basic attitudes of some of the participants, but we are far from understanding this as the **key (constitutive) process** that will trigger a profound transformation.

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[1] Biao Xiang (2013) Multi-scalar ethnography: An approach for critical engagement with migration and social change. - Ethnography , September 2013, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 282-299

Our article has the following sections to explore this issue (as wicked one) and also harness (not solving) the problem. In the *first section* we examine the origins, main goals and instruments of inclusive education, which allow us to define the main goals of the institutional design. On this basis, we will identify key assumptions/ premises of the current state of art of policy theory that would allow them to respond appropriate to these needs, and implement specific policy instruments. Finally, we discuss why conventional governance arrangements and community experience at the local level restrain or are even incompatible with the development of new governance arrangements, and accomplish that policy initiative, thereby still creating sharp controversies between traditional institutions in understanding a field between actors.

The second section describes our research: its methodology, research methods and organization of the research process. We will briefly examine a method and technique of critical dialogue that would allow the development of: (a) a communication process between stakeholders which different *meaning space* in a field, (b) building trust to create new practice space – initially a virtual space for joint activities. This methodology and technique is designed to change well- established individual practical interpretative frameworks of the policy area, and aims to identify a new action-patterns on issues where compatibility of participants' positions emerges and re-constituted. Next, we describe the methods of data collection and generalization, i.e. in which the research is rather the construction of network prototype. it is largely an exploration of empirical fieldwork experiences and a discussion of our in shaping our research.

In the third section we examine the results of this study, its weakness and failures; and, explore core dilemmas for future research, analysis and discussion.

I Institutional context for inclusive education policy

1.1. Shifts in the mission and style of agile and interactive public policy

Developed countries in EU have reached the threshold of policy targets which have led them behind the needs of standard policy problems and their solutions for median citizen. The21th century presumes the promotion of social capacity through enhancing diversity and opening creative potential for multiple and un-discovered or neglected capabilities of citizens. This is the policy which is based in intensive constitution and use of resources. Besides, the policy in 21th century is searching for ways to harness social processes which are largely contingent and unpredictable and to respond to unpredictable failures as well as to use unforeseen innovation opportunities. For instance, few of us have still reflected about possible positive opportunities of distance learning in networks caused by COVID-19 pandemy, and have still mostly focussed on negative experiences of this imposed necessity. Actually this would be considered as a forceful entrance into the *world of relational space*, which methodologically has become the basis for ecology-sensitive spatial planning methods (Latour 2004, Murdoch 2006)[2].

This trend towards of multiplicity and contingency has caused major shift of *policymaking dynamics*. Policy should not be considered anymore as "speaking truth to powers" (Wildavsky[3]) by knowledge-

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[2] Latour, B. (2004) Politics of Nature. London: Harvard University Press; Murdoch J. (2006) Post-structuralist Geography a guide to relational space. Sage;
[3] Wildavsky, A. 1979. Speaking Truth to Power: The Art and Craft of Policy Analysis. Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company.

able experts but as the process of 'making sense together'[4] by different stakeholders from top politicians to front-line officials and practitioners. One of such post-modern shifts is exactly the policy of inclusive education. Thus we briefly delineate a new specific of the policy process in last decades, which unfortunately is not sill widely recognized in policymaking practices.

The first, modern policymakers we are faced firstly not with problems but with *problem-situation* (M. Reynolds, S. Holwell 2010). I.e. we could guess vaguely about some crucial issues which are misused in education process, and also opportunities and ways of combating unknown threats. But this could be dome only through trials and errors which is rather the process of unpacking the in endless chain of small but continuous innovations (Chia, Tsoukas 2002). For this reason there are tremendous difficulties in mobilizing potential stakeholders and in ex ante defining realistic outcomes. I.e. this problem situation should be unpacked case by case in the course of practical probing of new opportunities of community's existing potentials or dispositions. What is important, in this process *enacting* of the context are re-defined and re-constituted actor's themselves, their interests and as a rule incompatible meaning frames (Schön and rein 1994). These are actually *wicked problems* (Rittel 1972[5]) about which three decades later Winship (2006[6]) argued: „You dont' know where you are going, but you might actually get there." Wicked problems are frequently considered as constraints and troubles in the traditional context of policymaking. However, because of uncertainty and unpredictability they are creating not only problems and threats but opening opportunities in constituting intensive resources.

The second need in innovation of policy process, especially acute in local governance is linked with *practice turn* in social and organisational analysis. Practice turn in the policy analysis turns construtivist-cultural theories of society (Recwich[7]) towards *everyday space* of social actions and innovations (Nicolini 2012[8], Schatzky 2010[9], Cook, Wagenaar 2012). This has been largely a new coming of pragmatist epistemology, which put emphasize to the process (uncertainty, unpredictability) and time-lines which enables to follow how real innovations emerge from everyday doings and saying in the context of material infrastructures. In its phenomenological version, based largely in heritage of Heidegger and Wittgenstein (Chia, Tsoukas 2010), policy explores not the logic of traditional linear planning-implementation cycle. According to practice turn (which involves huge spectrum of authors starting from theories of macro-social (Bourdieu, Giddens) to ethnomethodology of micro-order (Garfinkel),[10]) knowledge is always contextual, and functionally useful practical

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[4] Hoppe R. (1999) Policy analysis, science and politics: from 'speaking truth to power' to 'making sense together'. - Science and Public Policy, volume 26, number 3, June 1999, pages 201–210; Hoppe, R. 2010. The Governance of Problems: Puzzling, Powering, Participation. Bristol University Press.

[5] H. Rittel (1972) Systems Analysis of 'The First and Second Generations'. - In: P. Laconte, J. Gibson, A. Rapoport (Ed) (1982) HUMAN AND ENERGY FACTORS IN URBAN PLANNING: A SYSTEMS APPROACH Martinus Nijhoff Publishers

[6] Winship, C. 2006. Policy Analysis as Puzzle Solving. – M. Moran, M. Rein, R. Goodin (eds.), Handbook of Public Policy. Oxford University Press, 109–223.

[7] Andreas Reckwitz (2002)Toward a Theory of Social Practices A Development in Culturalist Theorizing. - European Journal of Social Theory 5(2): 243–263

[8] Davide Nicolini (2012) Practice Theory, Work, and Organization. An Introduction. Oxford University press

[9] Schatzki, T. R. 2010 The Timespace of Human Activity: On Performance, Society, and History as Indeterminate Teleological Events. Lanham: Lexington Books.

[10] J. M. Atkinson and J. E. Heritage (eds.), (1984) Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 413–29; Richards, D. S. (2001). Talking sense: Ethnomethodology, Postmodernism and Practical Action. In R. Westwood and S. E. Linstead (eds.), The Language of Organization. London: Sage, 20–45.

knowledge emerges from practice as a meaningful social actions. Simultaneously with *sense-making* in a time-scale (Weick 2009[11]) the context in which practical innovations are opened is also *enacted*. So, the policy innovation is not a solution of known problems, but, like theory of wicked issues argues, the process of unpacking the problem situation and at the same times re-constitution of involved actors in order to increase their capacity to adapt to the context and to promote opportunities that an unfolding context provides. As Cook and Wagenaar[12] perfectly defined, the policy process at the level of practice is the development of know-how in the course of practical collective actions in achieving own goals in *the eternally unfolding present*. In sum, the era of big narratives is over, but through the incremental grass root collective innovation it is possible to open new opportunities and at the same time own capacities which we have not expected to have yet.

The third conception (or largely – trend) is a modernized understanding of social systems. Those are considered not only as patterns which balance at the edge of order and uncertainty (Prigogine, Stengers 1984)[13] in which differentiation and variety as well as breaking of linear traces of development are normality[14]. Those systems are also considered as human made, or *soft systems* (Chechland 2010), which are designed through cycles of discourses with stakeholders of the problem-situation, and would work in practice as soon as actors who designed those system-patterns are actual constituents in promoting collectively their aims in the practice. This design process presumes also a high level of uncertainty and unpredictability and high controversies, including mutual mismatch of cognitive frames of constituents. Nevertheless only in this way -- and it has been tested on numerous empirical cases -- it is possible to arrange more or less purposeful collective actions in our post-modern times.

In sum, these conceptual innovations on the (very practical) theories of the policy process, ensure us to explore and managed a rather post-modern problem situation which is resumed by the policy of inclusive education. As reader of subchapter may suspect, this policy is exactly the case which abovementioned theoretical innovation expect to make operational.

Among other innovations this vision presumes the re-consideration of traditional patterns of central local authority relations. This shift paradoxically, increases a leadership role of central educational institutions, but only in case of skilful delegation of policy discretion in contextual design to front line actors – teachers, specialist, community organisation etc. - at the local educational space. Before checking contours of new pattern of central local relation we briefly introduce the conception of inclusive education as EU policy initiative.

1.2. EU policy framework

All European countries have ratified the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action in Special Needs Education (1994). This it is a key element in the framework of many countries' policies. The principles encompassed in the Salamanca Statement should underpin all education policies, not just those specifically dealing with *special needs* education. These principles relate to equal opportunities in terms of genuine access to education, respect for individual differences and quality education for all specifically focused upon promoting personal strengths and neutralizing individual

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[11] Weick K. (2009) Making Sense of the Organization Volume 2, The Impermanent Organization. Wiley

[12] S.D. Noam Cook and Hendrik Wagenaar (2012) Navigating the Eternally Unfolding Present: Toward an Epistemology of Practice. - The American Review of Public Administration 42(1) 3–38, 2012

[13] Prigogine, I.; Stengers, I. 1984. Order Out of Chaos. New York: Bantam.

[14] Chia R. (1999) A 'Rhizomic' Model of Organizational Change and Transformation: Perspective from a Metaphysics of Change. British Journal of Management, Vol. 10, 209–227 (1999) M. Reynolds, S. Holwell (2010) (eds.), Systems Approaches to Managing Change: A Practical Guide. Springer,

weaknesses. The key legal frameworks impacting on inclusive education are outlined within the UNESCO Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (2009) based on Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The former document suggests that: 'Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners … An "inclusive" education system can only be created if ordinary schools become more inclusive – in other words, if they become better at educating all children in their communities'[15] (p. 8). This document emphasize that: 'Inclusion is thus seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education." (p. 7)

At the European level, there are a number of documents that outline member states' objectives in relation to supporting specifically on learners with special educational needs and their inclusion in mainstream education. The first of these dates from 1990 with the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of Education concerning Integration of children and young people with disabilities into ordinary systems of education. In 1996, the Council published the Resolution on the human rights of disabled people and the Commission published a Communication (a statement asking for Council action) on the Equality of opportunity for people with disabilities. In 2003 the European Council on Equal opportunities issued the document for pupils and students with disabilities in education and training. In 2007, the European Council of Education Ministers identified special needs education as being one of the 16 priority objectives to be considered within the Lisbon 2010 Objectives work (European Commission, 2007).

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education started from early 2000 to promote strategic papers and recommendations as well as progress reviews of implementation of this policy initiative. The first 'Key Principles for Special Needs Education – Recommendations for Policy Makers' was published in 2003, and then was issued an upgraded version in 2009. The key principles range from national level to school level work, each of which must be considered within specific policy frameworks which intend in different ways to promote quality in inclusive education. There are however considerable differences of various countries in recognizing the problem as well as in developing their own policy responses.

In 2003, the percentage of pupils in compulsory education officially recognised *as having SEN* across the countries ranges from below 1% to 19%. The percentage of learners with SEN *in special schools* and classes also varies widely, with some countries placing less than 1% of all learners in separate provision and others more than 5% (2009). The continuing situation is that such data reflects differences in assessment procedures, financing structures and policies for provision rather than differences in the actual incidence of special educational needs across countries (2009: 8).[16] In Estonia the awareness of an issue is rather high. In 2014 the proportion of SEN students was 22,2% and about 5% from them are attending special schools.

There are five purposes and principles on which the policy arrangements at local level should be built.

Firstly, there is a need to enhance considerably the scope of inclusive education and not to restrain an issue of formally recognized youth with special education needs or disabilities. The policy should

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[15] European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2009. Key Principles for Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education – Recommendations for Policy Makers, Odense, Denmark: European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education
[16] European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2009. Key Principles for Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education – Recommendations for Policy Makers, Odense, Denmark: European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education

focus on all those who are at risk of exclusion and in risk of school failure. For identifying those at risk and for preventing the risk the attitudes – positive and negative -- should be taken into account, and not only those of learners, but also their parents, community members, teachers and other constituents. This strategy should be targeted to the shift in conventional attitudes, stereotypes and superstition. At the start, i.e. at the level of pre-school education it must be established a clear educational career planning of all students and creating the career story lines of learners with regular analysis assessment of process and restraints, as well as counselling the correction of this storyline. This should result in developing personalised learning approaches for all learners, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or similar individualised teaching programme. Also the change of teaching styles and methods should be introduced which are based simultaneously on cooperative and interactive teaching as well cooperative and interactive learning between pupils. Teaching should be based on social constructivist learning conception which presumes the context for collaborative problem solution approaches which emphasizes the practice based knowledge formation (Dewey, Vygodsky)[17].

The second purpose is the shift in education and training in inclusive education for teachers, which presumes their changing roles and competences. There are substantially new roles which a teacher should command. Inclusive education is participative in various ways, including involvement into teamwork of teachers, into management of schools, in mastering of after-school educational forms and in commanding good community work skills. This would be identified as the increased of multi-functionalism and multiple-capacities of teacher's staff. This obviously should change also the status of teachers as well as their economic standing. At the same time, the strategy of inclusive education presumes the preparation of subsidiary and highly qualified support or staff which should assist main teaching staff and take over certain responsibilities in ensuring the learning capacity and motivation of learners. Presumably, in order to facilitate effective collaborative learning, especially in smaller communities, it should be ensured the involvement into teaching process also professionals from different services and sectors and providing a shared training opportunities for them.

The third strategy is the development of organisational patterns and appropriate meaning space in the policy community that promotes inclusion. As we demonstrated in sub-chapter of post-welfare state policy process, inclusive education is qualitatively new policy and presumes different approaches to education governance and the process-based organizing (Weick 1995, Chia, Tsoukas 2002). We can entitle this as shift towards *diversity and contingency* management and steering. On the one hand, schools would not anymore considered only in traditional sense as a peak institution (like church, or council) of community space. In the context of inclusive education it should provide an another kind of leadership, being primarily as meta-governor of education network which besides is intermingled with other networks in local community like local community safety network, social capabilities-building or health promotion networks. Hence, schools should become as attractor point of majority of community stakeholders, not only an arena for education officials, teaching staff and parents. On the other hand, the school management could not anymore rely in Trompernaars[18] terms on the *family like* organisational culture but should become more like *incubator*-organisation, which is process based organisation of incremental and cooperative innovations and is able to promote more ad hoc collaborative partnership practices. Although the basic school presumes a rather strict general educational standards and outputs, these outputs should be achieved through fitting different capacities to standards in the course of experimenting , probing, reassessing etc. Both dimensions of

[17] Glassman M. (2001) Dewey and Vygotsky: Society, Experience,and Inquiry in Educational Practice. - Educational Researcher, Vol. 30. No. 4, pp. 3–14

[18] Riding the waves of culture : understanding cultural diversity in business / Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner,   London : Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2011

network type arrangements presume that all members of a school, despite their different status, should become in real action situations mutually compatible and hence – constitutive. Inclusive education contains rather different purposes and presumes controversial interests of stakeholders. Thus, new organizing patterns should not be managed through restraining and supressing varieties and controversies but instead via fitting them in different partnership patterns.

Fourth the policy of inclusive education must rely on elaborated **infrastructure of support** from institutional environment, i.e. educational organisations must not be only an open organisations but should have well elaborated bridging and buffering strategies in order to accumulate inputs from potential partners from environment. Those are firstly different specialist services, organisations and resource centres, and professionals that reflect local level needs. Support structures should be able to respond flexibly to different needs of the process of inclusive education at organisational, individual professional and family level. This support would come from different sectors, including education institutions of different levels and sectors (i.e. vocational training schools, private schools). Because teams of support personnel at local space usually commands rare but multifunctional capacities and should be applied simultaneously cross-sectorally. At the same time new policy arrangements should avoid any form of centralisation and bureacuratisation of support services, because those specialists are as a rule partners in multiple networks. Besdies, this support services should be designed to co-ordinate in the best way possible successful transitions of all learners between different phases of their lifelong learning (pre-school, compulsory, post-compulsory and employment related education), i.e. insuring seamless life trajectories and cycles. The inclusive educations policy arrangements, especially at local space should stream for as mucy as holistic approach whereas retaining high level diversity of networks. "Decision-making regarding support not only involves, but also becomes increasingly led by mainstream class teachers, learners and their families, working in partnership with inter-disciplinary professionals. This requires a major attitudinal shift on the part of specialist professionals, as well as changes to their practice." p. 20 This would be considered as an another angle of participatory and open process of inclusive education.

Fifth, purpose is the development of **flexible resourcing practices** that promote inclusion. This would become as forerunning experience in intergovernmental resourcing patterns as well as the future local finances. Inclusive education presumes very flexible interpretation of resources and should refrain from reducing resourcing to its fiscal dimension. The first step towards this approach is to differentiate between *extensive* or accumulated resources for mere spending on the one hand and[19] intensive resources which are deriving from capacities of actors and are renewable resources because possibility to re-constitute them via different partnerships and exchanges. For instance, the reliance on local actors cooperation or developing a positive image of inclusive education is based on existing capacities, presume marginal additional spending but are prone to extension due to appropriate coordinating or leadership at local level. Such resources are unfolding from learning practices, innovative organizing practices, especially through collective actions via different alliances and partnerships. In this context would be interesting to renew the conception of urban regimes[20], which actually foresee the concept of intensive resourcing. There are two other important innovative approaches to resourcing of the policy as the wicked problem. The first is intentional strategy of preventive resource allocation not only in sense of prevention policy (i.e. ensuring health or safety prevention in a community) but in sense of farsighted allocation of recourses into potential issues of

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[19] Sootla G. Actors in the policy process. – In: Public Policy, II, ch.3.5. (In Estonian).
[20] Stoker, G. 1998. Regime Theory and Urban Politics. – David Judge, Gerry Stoker, Harold Woman (eds.), Theories of Urban Politics. London: Sage, 54–71; Dowding, K. 2001. Explaining Urban Regimes. – International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 25, 1.

success or failure which a rather controversial policy domain of inclusive education would trigger. In our opinion there is no lack of potentials or dispositions of capacity of inclusive education but the lack of ability or willingness to actualize them in the community. The second approach is conventional co-resourcing activities which is simultaneously the mechanism of selection of priorities as well as existing potentialities in the community. [21]

We should be aware, that those are normative principles, which reflect rather purposes whereas the mundane ground of educational policy is extremely different and controversial. Firstly, capacity of local communities as rather diverse and bounded on different traditions, from libertarian competitiveness and voting by foots up to closed corporatist collusion and willingness to build up image of idyllic harmony for constituents outside (Taylor 2004). Secondly, inclusive education must recognize the diversity and build up on rather controversial values and interests of different constituents. The more the policy is directed in favour of certain special needs, the more conflicts over the distribution of attention and resources it would trigger. This is especially relevant dimension of the policy, because the accomplishment of a new approach is prone to errors, miscalculations and misunderstandings and presumes a high consensus of long term purposes of the policy. Third, we expect that the very policy design of inclusive education would face the traditional governance patterns and old institutional stereotypes. Inclusive education presumes principally new roles of policy actors – responsible for its accomplishment, starting from the role of central policy designers up to grass-root actors at the front level education process. We expect that maybe the most crucial re-assessment should be done at the level of local governance which is main actor in adapting the general policy outlines to the local context. We emphasise that inclusive education presumes network type of arrangements for accomplishment of those aims and principles, and holistic approach *in the local space*, which can cross formal organisational borders and prevent any organisational closure, especially in the face of controversial challenges for an organisation. Local government should refrain of deep organisational closure which is developed at the rhetoric of its autonomy; at the same time local authorities in Estonia should be able to provide absolutely different type of leadership (i.e. metagovernance of the "mess" of actors). This dimension of inclusive education policy still rather weakly analysed and recognized (as the problem). This is main focus of our article.

In 2019 the leadership of inclusive education policy re-considered these largely normative aims for the angle of possible school failure. Actually the harnessing of wicked issues is interpreted as the policing the governance failure. This would be our next challenge to reinterpret our data from this point of view. This scenario was defined as follows: "From **a systemic perspective**, school failure occurs when **a system fails** to provide fair and inclusive education services that lead to successful learning, engagement, wider participation in the community and transition to a stable adulthood. Specifically, **at the school level**, school failure is defined as a school's incapacity to provide fair and inclusive education and an adequate learning environment for learners to achieve outcomes worthy of their effort and potential. At **the societal/community level**, school failure occurs when the system fails to provide adequate mechanisms and services to assure participation in the wider community. This results in learners being marginalised." p. 22

1.3. Local and regional institutional context in Estonia

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[21] European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2011) Key Principles for Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education – Recommendations for Practice, Odense, Denmark: European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education; European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2019. Preventing School Failure: Examining the Potential of Inclusive Education Policies at System and Individual Levels. (A. Kefallinou, ed.). Odense, Denmark

1.3. Local and regional institutional context in Estonia to design and implement educational policy

The administrative reform carried out in Estonia in 2017 also abolished county governments, which had been operating as regional administration entities since the early 1990s and played an important role in county (regional) strategic planning and its implementation in the 1990s (Figure 1). Despite their weakening role in ensuring the regional administration and coordination of the state affairs (Sootla, Laanes 2015), it was still the only multifunctional regional institution in Estonia. Already since the beginning of the 2000s, and especially after the termination of county governments, the centralisation of the state's regional functions has increased in several policy fields (ministries) (Sootla, Kattai 2020). At the same time, no horizontal and regional coordination institutions or mechanisms for has not been set up to replace them. Thus, the Ministry of Education does not have the necessary institutions to implement its policies at regional and local level. Although, the Education and Youth Board was established under the Ministry of Education in 2020, it has no regional units.
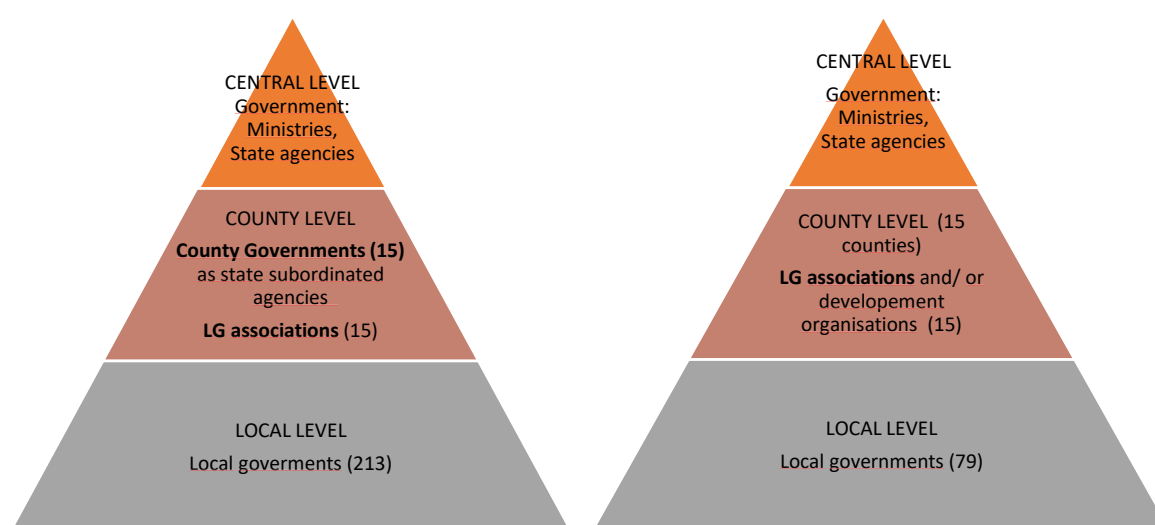

Figure 1. General vertical administrative system of Estonia before and after the reforms County and Local Government reform 2017-2018.

Estonian local governments have a statutory task of planning the joint development of the county. After the abolition of county governments, the managing authority for that, must be agreed by the county local governments (with the support of at least 2/3 of the local governments, including the largest local government/ centre in the county). Generally, the managing authority is county local government association (LGA). LGA-s were established in the early 1990s, mainly as an organisation of representation and political co-operation among local governments in a county and with very limited administrative tasks. Due to their main function at that time, their legal status is a voluntary co-operation organization as a special form of NGO. While the county governments still operated (as state regional administration), together with LGA-s (as the co-operation body of local governments) they managed to ensure the governance of the county space (topological) in cooperation with each other and complementing each other, despite some of its weaknesses.

Table 1 shows the change in the number of local governments, residents and schools in Rapla County per local government before and after the administrative reform. While 6 of the 9 local governments before the reform had 1-2 schools, there are up to 8 schools in a local government after the reform. This presupposes the formation of school spaces within the municipality and thus the need to manage education in a new way.

Table 1. Change in the structure of local governments during the reform in Rapla County

	Before LG reform	After LG reform (2017)
Number of municipalities	9	4
Average number of inhabitants	3700	8800
Average number of schools per municipality	2	5

Since 2018, the capacity of local governments has increased, on the one hand (including the capacity for developing a systemic approach to the inclusive education, which has been an underlying principle in education policy since 2010[22]) and they have gained a new responsibility for the joint development planning in the county, on the other hand. This directed local governments focus to the key issues of policies binding different stakeholders in the county. Thus, one of the operational goals of the Rapla development strategy is *'to create a **unified system of educational institutions** in the county, in which all schools operate in a close cooperation network, with the aim of ensuring **all students' ability-appropriate development** and **smooth transition from one educational institution to another'**.* Such an ambitious goal requires the cooperation between different types of educational institutions with different ownership forms, and other actors. All this in a situation where both, coordination instruments and experience, are lacking.

The diversity of the county school network by owners and school types is presented in Table 2. There are two secondary schools and 15 lower-level general education schools (primary and basic schools) owned by local governments. In addition to municipal schools there are secondary schools, the school for children with special needs and two vocational schools owned by state and also two autonomous private schools operating in a separate legal framework (including directly funded by the state). Nevertheless, there is essentially no mechanism for linking schools of different owners and levels of education, except for the formal legal framework for the organization of education, which regulates the activities of schools.

Table 2. Schools in Rapla county by their ownership

	Vocational schools	Upper-secondary schools	Secondary schools	Primary schools	Total
State owned	2	1	1 (special needs school)	0	4
Municipality owned	0	2	13	2	17
Private	0	0	2	0	2
Total	2	3	16	2	23

1.4 The core problems of the regional school system

We highlight the core problems of the regional education space rising from the context of local and regional governance, which are essentially the starting point for conducting the study. In this study

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[22] Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act.
https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/519042021001/consolide

we explore these challenge in more detailed in terms of both the problems and their possible solutions.

First, the fragmentation of educational institutions and functions in the regional space (county) and the largely ownership-centred attitude, which does not favour cooperation. At the same time, the Estonian education strategy 2035 is aimed at seamless education, which presupposes the transition from an institution-centred education system to a student- centred one, i.e., extensive co-operation between different educational institutions in planning and actually implementing the mobility of the student's individual educational path and life cycle. There is essentially no coordination between them, as there is no specific actor responsible for it.

The abolition of the county governments left one of their central tasks (comprehensive coordinating role) hanging in the air. A limited number of individual activities (Olympiads, etc.) were assigned to LGAs, which is not enough. All the more so, as ongoing comprehensive reforms in the field of education are very intensive. The coordinating role of county governments was highly valued by school leaders and the remaining void is seen as a setback to the institutional integrity of education in the county.

More and more students need support services in inclusive education (nearly 20% of students, Centar 2016). The two-tier system of counselling – on local and state level - creates a shortage of professional support services. Central level counselling centres and their services are organisationally separated from the educational institutions, at the same time there are not enough competent specialists on the primary level. The resource for providing support services (lack of support specialists, proficiency in new methodologies, counselling teachers and parents, etc.) does not reach smaller schools on a regular basis or in the required quality. Autonomous and administratively separated institutions in the field of education find it difficult to achieve synergies even in areas where they have essentially common problems and goals.

Teacher training and shaping the image of the teaching profession have been mainly a matter of general education policy at the ministry level. Local authorities have not taken this as their agenda, and they also lack the capacity to establish strategic partnerships for teacher training, e.g., with universities. There is a deep shortage of young teachers in schools and even schools within a same local government compete for teachers. It would be sensible to find common and systematic solutions across local governments. Municipalities actions could complement the relevant central government policies to address teacher shortages.

There is a growing need for a better link between general education and other areas of local development - to intensify cooperation between educational institutions and private and public sector institutions, including in the development of economic and business education and environmental education.

2. Research methods, techniques: organizing research as a live practice building

2.1. The method of critical dialogue (Forester 2009, 2012) is based on a critical pragmatism perspective and has deep affinities with practice-oriented mediated discourse analysis (Scollon

2001).[23] Forester's method (see also Gergen 2009)[24] draws on two main presumptions. **First,** similar to Luhmann's closed system's approach, it is assumed that even in the same policy area the, mundane practical experiences of different actors are generalized by them into resilient cognitive frameworks or filters which are largely 'blind' to each other. I.e. even if the partners involved in the discussion receive adequately the text and speech, , in most cases they , in most cases they subconsciously translate them into their language (frame) which relevant only to those holding their (or their reference group) interpretive frames. Because their practical cognitive framework so accurately reflects the actors' daily experience, different seemingly rational studies or data cannot break these frames from the angle of the other (opposite) frame. At the level of oral or written communication the incompatibility of these rhetorical frameworks usually worsens (Rein, Schön 1994). Thus, a simple discussion can further limit communication. Moreover, at the level of conventional communication patterns, major actors do not have communication habits as common meaning creation. First, they are not usually proficient in the art of critical listening (Forester 2004). I.e. what is traditionally considered as conflict of interest of autonomous policy actors in the field, is in fact a miscommunication between the holders of the different frameworks. If they cannot communicate, the error can be resolved by a majority vote or by bargains of mutual benefits.

Second, the formation of common space of meaning/ interpretation could not be based on a better **representation** and exploration of reality, because existing and built-in cognitive frameworks mean that different actors represent the "reality" from the angle of their established frameworks. For individual, a better representation of the reality means the emergence of furthering horizon's effect. These horizons of different actors cannot be crossed through better representation. To break this paradox, it is first necessary to develop a kind of reflective dialogue, in which actors become able to feel (and to look at their own worldview) through its practical visual imprints (i.e. interpretation) other "the other" (Mead). I.e. creating a practical context in which the individual could reflect him or herself as an outsider. Gadamer identified this process by as a **fusion of horizons** (Gadamer 2004?). This does not simply require communication/ interaction, but practical joint intervention in reality and joint action in reshaping the environment of this task and deciphering it through joint creation of a specific product (Rein, Schön 1995). In this practical joint intervention, the **re-constitutive** effect of actors (re-creation of actors?) and the creation of new practical results can begin to fuse their spaces of meaning. However, this does not in any way mean that participants refrain from pursuing practical objectives in joint action, but rather they may have certain pragmatic and compatible courses of action/ action patterns to advance their practical objectives. Not just interactions but transactions between them would trigger the process of mutual translations of frameworks and meaning spaces, which are still incompatible.

The Inclusive education policy is a policy that takes place precisely in the local/ county space, breaking down the logic pattern of education institutions focused on children's average capacity, which are considered as integrated family model (Trompernaars). Inclusive education, as a process – like community safety or health promotion - involves numerous different actors – including children – with different practical roles and cognitive frameworks that cut across large traditional institutional boundaries (school, local government, family, state supervisory institution) and sectors (public,

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[23] Scollon, R. (2001). Mediated Discourse: The nexus of practice. London/New York: Routledge.

[24] Gergen, K. J., Gergen, M. M. and Barrett, F. J.(2004) 'Dialogue: life and death of the organization', in D. Grant,
C. Hardy, C. Oswick and L. Putnam (eds), The Sage handbook of organizational discourse.London: Sage.
pp. 39–59. http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781848608122; Kenneth J. Gergen Relational Being
Beyond Self and Community. Oxford university press 2009

private, voluntary). For this reason, a new policy-making space (of practice) should be created that could integrate actors on a heterogeneous basis, and is organized as an emerging type of network.

2.2. Study design: developing a networked based cooperation for determination of joint problems and solutions

The aim of our study was, **through a practical dialogue, help to create a network-based cooperation** that would enable all students to acquire an education appropriate to their abilities and to continue their studies in an education institution that meets the needs of the labour market. In order to achieve this goal, educational institutions must form a **comprehensive system** that ensures **strategic management and partnerships with stakeholders** (vocational education, labour market institutions, higher education institutions, business associations and regions) and both negotiation and partnership potential with the Ministry. To this end, we set two goals, first, to form a consensus understanding of the co-operation needs and readiness of different educational institutions in the **joint discussion space of leaders of educational institutions and local governments** of Rapla County. Secondly, to form as consensual understanding as possible of the possible **cooperation structure** (institution) and **set of tasks of the regional educational space**, **division of labour, and potential mutual synergy**. Also to thoroughly discuss their organizational principles and management tools, which would not infringe the autonomy of the agencies or level their capacity. In the process, it is necessary to develop a sense of mission for the development of regional education, in which one central aspect is the form of the participation of independent institutions in the joint organization of specific strategic functions.

The methodology of the study was based on Forrester's (2009) methodology of interactive group decision-making, which is considered suitable for screening the opinions of participants with complex patterns and spectres of opinions. This is distinguished, firstly, by the balanced matching of individual inputs and, secondly, by finding completely new solutions in the process of active simulation of change, which cannot be imagined from individual positions and perspectives. According to this method, three types of communication activities - dialogue, debate and negotiation are used to reconcile the views of the parties (Table X).

Table 3. Phases of the study and methods used

Stage of screening of opinions	Method and goal
I phase: dialogue Defining and interpreting the problems of the educational space	Individual and group interviews with representatives of different types of schools (basic schools, gymnasiums, vocational schools, private schools) and partner organizations (heads of local governments and / or education and representatives of the Ministry of Education and Research) (19)
II phase: debate Validation of problem interpretations and solutions	Joint seminars to present and screen the results of stakeholder individual interview (4)
III phase: negotiation Selection of consensual solutions, preparation of an action plan	reconciling the views of the parties at the level of problems and solution, in the form of thematic focus group interviews (5)

3. Tentative results and lessons of in harnessing a wicked issue

3.1. Stakeholders attitudes of the problems in regional educational space

During in-depth interviews, we selected the main problem areas of the education field and detangled their content. The stakeholders provided their explanations on how to resolve the issues. The bundles of problems together were diverse, yet integrated. For the most part, both the problems and their explanations were consensual, but for more complex problem areas even contradictory. We point out the main problem areas, explain their content and explanations in general. The sub-problems and their explanations are described in more detail in the corresponding table.

3.1.1. Absence of territorial management of the educational space

The main problem of managing the educational space is lack of coordination, lacking both vertical and horizontal coordination mechanisms, and its overall underestimation. The education organisation is school-based, while the problems faced are common between schools. If we add schools' different ownership (state, local government, private sector) and the fragmentation of different levels of education, we see a formulation of a complex educational space, which is not tied together by any mechanism at all. The Ministry of Education, as a policy-maker, has failed to design policy implementation mechanisms in the regional education space, apparently hoping that issues can be resolved on an institution basis (schools). However, schools do not have the tools to design systemic solutions in collaboration with other stakeholders. Municipal education managers generally also have not developed an integrated education management system within the local government, necessary competencies or mechanisms for the implementation of local education policy across schools. All this leaves schools a great deal of autonomy, but also alone with their problems. The Estonian education strategy 2035 has set the goal of shaping the development of students through the design of their individual study paths. This requires not only the identity of the learner being taken into account in the learning process, but also flexible system and coordinated model in which students can move between educational institutions and levels. At the moment, however, there are no mechanisms for this.

Problem area	Sub-problems	Explanations
Territorial management of education	Challenges in adapting and implementing national education policies in the region	Ministry: The capacity of local governments is low Local governments: Ministry does not design implementation tools Schools: there is nothing we can do, this the task of the state and local governments
	Fragmentation of owners of education institutions (local government, private, state)	Management based ownership, no coordinating agencies nor responsibility
	Weak level of strategic management at the local government level	The quality of local government education management is low; institution (school) based the approach – everyone for themselves
	Collective associations of school leaders are modestly institutionalised and encaged in 15regional management of education	The leaders' association more as a club, local government leaders have not perceived the positive effects of their involvement; fear of school managers gaining too much power when joining forces
	There is no mechanism for learning from the collaborative experiences of schools	Although schools carry out many and successful bilateral co-operation activities, they are project-based and experience is not transferred or disseminated on wider scale
	Lack of analytical capacity to manage 15regional education	Local governments do not delegate because they do not see the necessity and are short of resource
	Introducing the ability to plan students individual learning path	There are no mechanisms at implementation level that undermines policy implementation.

3.1.2. Problems with finding teachers and providing them full time employment

There are two types of subproblems. First, small schools are unable to offer teachers full-time employment and therefore enough motivating salaries. A realistic solution could be the coordinated mobility of teachers between different small schools, but as the educational space is very school-centred, no such systematic organizational model has been created. Many school and education leaders also oppose so-called migrant teachers for fear that their participation in the school environment and culture will be lower. This leads to another problem of teachers being employed in across several areas of competence in which they do not have official training. As a result, the quality of education decreases, and secondly, it is demotivating to a teacher who would prefer to work in depth in his / her field of expertise. The result is the movement of young teachers to large schools (where they receive full-time work in their field), which exacerbates the shortage of teachers in small schools.

Problem area	Sub-problems	Explanations
Problems of shortage and workload of teachers	The lack of teachers in small schools and a lack of adequate workload	Finding teachers is a concern of school managers and is based on personal contacts. Teachers are often not found because they cannot be offered a full-time employment
	Employment of teachers in several schools to ensure o16ptimal workload	The coordination system is undeveloped; the stakeholders are divided into two, supporting and opposing mobility, resulting in competition between schools
	Application of multi-functional teachers in basic subjects	One of the solutions already used for the teacher shortages and workload problem, is teachers teaching 2-3 different subjects resulting in non-qualified teachers.

3.1.3. The lack of system in personnel development

The next bunch of challenges stems from the problem of teacher shortage - the lack of system of personnel development in the field of education. The most important reason for the aggravation of this problem is the different explanations of local governments and education policy makers about the content and solutions of this problem. School and local government leaders consider this is primarily the responsibility of state education policy and the Ministry of Education, contrary as the responsibility of school owners (local governments). In practice, an effective solution requires a partnership between the two parties. And not only them, universities and other centres of excellence also must be part of this system. The agency (school) based teacher succession, recruitment and staffing policy do not enable to develop appropriate mechanisms and strategies. This applies not only to teachers, but also to the local governments' educational managers – developing of whom has seen first baby steps only recently in cooperation between Ministry and Association of Estonian Municipalities and Cities - and school managers. The succession, development and recruitment system should be a part of county's education management system.

Problem area	Sub-problems	Explanations
Lack of system in personnel development	Different perceptions of the shortage of educational staff	School and local government managers see the shortage of staff in the field of education as a matter of state education policy, but ministry primarily as the responsibility of the school administrators'
	Teachers' development is too institution-based	Institution-based staff development system in a situation where there are different school systems within local governments
	Teacher succession	There are no systematic relationship with universities and no other strategies to ensure the growth of teachers. This should be a matter of the county's educational space, but has not been developed.
	Lack of analytical capacity in the field of personnel development	Local governments do not have an overview of the statistical indicators of human resource related to education, which is a

		prerequisite for the knowledge-based development of the personnel development plan.
	Lack of development of school managers and local government education managers	There is little or no systematic development and monitoring of educational management capacity in the school regional educational space

3.1.4. Integration of teaching children with special educational needs

In the problem area of inclusive education, all the previous bundles of problems come together and intensify, i.e., the problems of implementing education policy, lack of coordination of the educational area and institution-based educational management. An important shift after the local government reform is the recognition and discussion of these problems and search for solutions. One of the core problems is that the concept of inclusive education has not been given enough sense in the education policy debates (see section 1.2), which means that different attitudes and visions about the implementation and solutions of inclusive education exist at the same time. If the ministry's vision is to move towards a so-called ideal inclusive education, where students with special needs are integrated as much as possible into general schools, then school managers argue that this is not always possible and will lead to a reduction in access to education for regular students. This results in quite strong communities of educational managers who support the concentration of children with special educational needs in separate schools or special sections in regular schools.

The lack of system is made more complicated by the fragmentation of the provision of education for children with special educational needs. Ministry has developed so-called level II counselling services of support specialists, which are not provided to schools, and runs its own regional schools for children with special educational needs. Schools and local governments are struggling to find support specialists - the same patterns as have emerged in the case of lack of teachers, but here in addition, the state is an additional party to the competitive situation with its own educational centres.

Problem area	Sub-problems	Explanations
Integration of schoolig children with special educational needs	Local governments have the main responsibility in implementing the policy	Implementation issues were underestimated, which has led to a little increase in readiness to adapt and build capacity to address children with special needs. School managers have not been able to explain the need for the allocation of resources (staff, smaller groups, training, coordination, etc.) necessary for the implementation of inclusive education to local government managers sufficiently or without difficulties
	The Ministry established a so-called Level II counselling system (counselling centres) in the county, which reduced the capacity of local governments	A specialist who had previously worked in schools was bought over by the state counselling centres; at the same time, the centres moved away from providing primary (school) services and focused only on assessing the need for out-of-school help
	The design of SEN implementation models varies greatly in schools	The design of implementation methods has remained agency-based and strongly depends on the abilities and attitudes of the school manager/ staff.
	Different paradigms for dealing with children with special educational needs	Communities with different visions have emerged in interpreting the content of inclusive education: a) children with special needs attend as much as possible in general schools (and regular classes), b) children with special needs must be referred to special schools; (c) creating a separate learning environment for children with special needs in general schools (separate classes, smaller groups, etc.). Municipalities and schools use different and ill-considered solutions
	There was no early detection system in kindergartens	Experts say the pressure on SEN services and activities in schools will be reduced by an early detection system and

		appropriate support services in kindergarten. However, the focus of inclusive education is still on schools.
	Lack of SEN support specialists	In the condition of growing demand, it has not been possible to train enough support specialists. Small schools are unable to provide them with sufficient workload and thus sufficient pay. Schools compete for a small number of support professionals.
	Coordinated deployment of support professionals in the education area	There is no coordinated system in place to implement support professionals in the regional educational space and / or county level, which would increase their professional implementation, the possibility to pay a competitive fee and provide services in small schools.

The table below summarizes the views on the implementation of inclusive education in practice (scope of inclusive education) and in terms of cooperation between local governments. Visions of ensuring a suitable school environment for children with greater support needs vary considerably. One set of positions, e.g., ministry, considers that only children with greater support needs (care-taking burden) need a separate school, and ensuring this is optimal at least at the county level in cooperation with local governments. The second set (municipal school managers and support specialists) consider it necessary to involve children as much as possible in regular schools, but still see the need for separate schools for children with greater support needs remaining. Visions of the scope of co-operation in maintaining schools for SEN also vary. Ministry also transfers its SEN schools to individual local governments, not to local governments jointly (on the grounds of legal formality that does not enable to transfer schools to joint ownership).

Table X. Models of implementing inclusive education from the prism of the school network

		Extent of inclusive education	
		Idealistlc	Realistic
Scope of cooperation between local governments in a county	**Fragmented**	The need for childrens' support is ensured in every school in each municipality	The support needs of children are mostly ensured in local school, but the local government also creates a separate school environment for children with higher support needs.
	Integrated	Within the county level cooperation, only for children with support needs with a care burden	Within the county level co-operation, there are three types of schools for children with greater support needs: full-time, dormitory and care workload

3.2. Debate and negotiations for the management of the regional education area

Preliminary solutions to address the above issues were developed during the stakeholder seminars and focus groups. There were no significant disagreements about the solutions, though there were in a selection of which ones to go further with. Most of the solutions were related to the management and coordination of the regional (county) educational space. However, the co-operation of local governments and their ability to enter into systemic co-operation is low. One reason for this is the strong attachment to individual problems. As one interviewee said about collaborative solutions: 'Do we get rid of the task ourselves by delegating it to the cooperation level? If not then we are not ready to delegate anything there'. This is a good illustration of the situation where local governments are - they can't do it themselves, but they are also not ready to invest in opportunities of synergy. The position of the Ministry of Education vis-à-vis local governments is similar - they are not ready to design governance structures in cooperation with local governments, while they do not have their own policy implementation structures on grassroot level.

However, there was a common understanding that Rapla County needed to develop a flexible structure for joint activities that would contribute to a better and coordinated implementation of different education policies. The aim was to build from the strengths of different school owners and institutions and to level out their weaknesses and to create common capacities in cooperation. A separate focus group focused on designing such a structure and management for joint activities. The main components of the common understanding of a solution were defined, which implementation requires a reasonably organized and resourced action program.

During the negotiation phase, it was agreed that as the task is sufficiently new and ambitious and its components are not yet clear, the development should be continued gradually based on a development document with specific tasks and deadlines, which will be continuously updated and monitored. It was found that, at least initially, there was no point in creating new structures or agencies. The Rapla County LGA is a suitable structure for joint activities to launch the process, on the basis of which these capabilities will be developed. To this end, it is necessary to develop the necessary changes in the structure of the RCALG, organize the support of local governments, select the topics that need attention, identify the necessary changes in the legal environment, etc. The structure of the central joint action should be in the form of the Education Council (HN) within the RCALG. It would be necessary to shape this as a new permanent structural unit, which on the one hand represents local governments in formulating legitimate recommendations for policy implementation; and, on the other hand, serves RCALG, its board and the general meeting (plenary) in formulating the respective decisions and supporting the supervision of their implementation.

It was also agreed in the formation of working groups for the Education Council. First, the Inclusive Education working group, which focuses on teaching children with special educational needs (SEN) (including support for particularly gifted children) and providing support services. Secondly, the working group on personnel development and teacher succession, which is focused on increasing the capacity to manage education and developing activities and methods to address the challenge of teacher shortages. Thirdly, a working group on seamless education, focused on cooperation between schools and developing tools and implementation practices of flexible student mobility between schools.

More formal co-operation and co-ordination instruments were also presented for discussion, such as delegating the tasks of local government county education management to the LGA, drawing up joint sectoral strategies and developing their implementation capacity, and establishing a joint agency to perform regional education space tasks, none of which found the support of local government leaders.

4. Lessons learned and conclusions

We tried to implement the methodology of critical dialogue (Forester 2009, 2012) and we partially succeeded. We succeeded in what was concerned with the unravelling of inclusive education as a failed problem (Rittel 1972), largely through the application of problem structuring techniques (Guess, Farnham 2000, Dunn 2018) and through stakeholder interpretations (Hoppe 2018). The limitations of implementing inclusive education in the regional school system became clearer. The narrowing of the interpretations and solutions of the problems in the debate phase was also successful – stakeholders did not yet accept, but understood other stakeholders' arguments and explanations of the problems and their possible solutions. However, we did not succeed in the negotiation phase, which should lead to the selection of consensual problems and thus solutions. Different views on the role of the stakeholders in the cooperation of the school area remained. The Ministry of Education defended its positions and was not ready to join the coordination of the school area as an official party (e.g., official

party, contract), but expressed its readiness to cooperate in the more informal role in further activities. Although the leaders of local governments acknowledged the need for co- and increased co-ordination at the county level, they were not ready to delegate any tasks or resources to the co-operation level. School leaders (the School Leaders' Chamber) wanted to maintain their autonomy and freedom from responsibility in the network and rather to play an advising role of an independent expert. The leaders and the office of the LGA were ready to create a coordinating capacity if additional resources were allocated for this purpose. Education leaders would have liked a formal structure established that would have linked school leaders and other stakeholders to the local government administrative system (although via LGA), thereby reducing the autonomy of the School Leaders' Chamber). None of the stakeholders was at thas point prepared to move forward with the establishment of a new joint network-based organization for the organization and provision of services.

We do not consider this as a total failure in joint capacity-building. Rather, the bundle of problems was too diverse and the steps expected from each stakeholder towards common network and partnership-based solutions were too long to take. More realistic way forward would be to move incrementally step by step (Lindbolm, Cohen 1979, Nadler, Tuchmann 1989) and thus to form a common regional network-based educational management model (Klijn, Koppenjan 2016) from a design perspective (Peters 2018). Educational space management design in this sense needs practical joint intervention in reality and joint action in reshaping the environment of this task and deciphering it through joint creation of a specific product (Rein, Schön 1995).

At the same time, institutional barriers must be overcome in the management of the county's educational space, or rather they must be redesigned. First, despite the implementation of administrative reform and thus presumably increasing cooperation capacity of local governments, protective autonomy still prevails (Amna, Montin 2000), where joint actions and decision-making is not seen as an opportunity to increase one's autonomy rather as a loss in one's autonomous decision-making rights.

Estonia's governance model for central-local relations is based on a dual model (Leemans 1970, Bennett 1997), but there are no mechanisms - to promote consensus and integration in the implementation of policies - and to develop common policies between central and local level in the context of the monopoly of governance spheres. Therefore, a dual central-local relationship models would be needed. This could be replaced by effective regional coordination mechanisms (Bouckaert et al 2010, Ferry 2019), which to a significant extent are also currently missing from Estonian administrative system.

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