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Research in Educational Administration & Leadership

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Editorial

The Critical Potential of Nordic School Leadership Research: Fundamental but Often Forgotten Perspectives

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Many phrases used in education policy discussions are very vague. They are fluid signifiers that everybody can interpret and understand in their own way. They are useful when building political consensus or affirmation.

But the phrases are often too vague when trying to communicate and understand educa-tion and educational leadership because they obscure the elements in the phrase: who is the political agent, and what are the relations between policy, research, school and staff. They also

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hide the purposes of schooling, and the societal values and power in the turna-round of political interests from education towards governance that are implicit in the 'as skilled as they can be.' It could have said as knowledgeable or as enlightened or autono-mous as they can be.

These are some of the fundamental phenomena in education and leadership, and they seem to be forgotten.

With this special issue we want to put critical analyses into the centre of research again as we analyse some of the dilemmas and conflicts between remembered and forgotten in-sights in education research on policy, society, schools and educational leadership, and thus between diverse and often conflicting interpretations of – what is fundamental in Nordic contexts: Danish, Finnish, Islandic, Norwegian and Swedish – school leadership re-search.[2]

Many phenomena can be found in the struggle between major discourses of school – the outcomes-based discourse and a general educational discourse. Generally speaking, this struggle originates from a major shift in international and national policy and governance of a welfare state and democratic-governed discourse towards a competitive state and economic-governed discourse (Moos, 2018, 2019a; Moos & Wubbels, 2018). These dis-courses are educational discourses, and thus also part of general societal, political and cultural discourses and practices. This may be a reason why it can be difficult

[2] All of the articles in this special issue are written as a result of the Copenhagen Symposium: **Fundamental but often forgotten perspectives on/in school and leadership**, October 2019. This conference was the third in a sequel of three. The second took place in Oslo Metropolitan University October 2017 under the theme: **Leading and organising education for citizenship of the world – through homogenisation or communicative diversity?** (Moos, Nihlfors, & Paulsen, 2018). The first conference took place in Uppsala University on November 2014 under the theme: Educational Leadership in Transition (Skott & Nihlfors, 2015).
Other chapters from the same symposium are published in: Moos, Nihlfors, Paulsen: **Re-centering the critical potential of Nordic school leadership research: fundamental but often forgotten perspectives.** Springer, 2020.

to notice and pay attention to the shifts or 'slidings' in them (Moos, 2019b).

Education research is investigating relations, values, positions etc. on the basis of the researcher's knowledge, but even they may have forgotten some fundamental knowledge because other dominant discourses have overshadowed it. The new, dominant discourse may have 'flown under their radar' and caused them to forget some fundamental perspectives.

Sometimes policy makers – and even academics – work hard to persuade populations and professionals that their political direction and ideas need to be followed and abided by. When we take on those ideas, we may forget known traditional knowledge. Insights and wisdom may be intentionally or unintentionally silenced, and not mentioned.

Analyses like those referred to above insist that educational policies move from a discourse of *Democratic Bildung* towards an *Outcomes Discourse*. This means that the purpose of schooling, a Democratic Bildung, is being *forgotten* and replaced by measurable educational aims, and democratic and sense-making leadership is replaced by top down economical management. *Fundamental* aspects of educational leadership are transformed from educational purpose towards measurable aims; leadership in relations is replaced by charismatic, single person management; and beliefs in trust and responsibility as core values are replaced by control and accountability.

Contemporary policies of educational leadership at most levels (transnationally, nationally and locally) and *education/training* of educational leaders promote and further these transformations for a complex set of reasons: turn of education towards marketplace, economical competition, and need for political legitimacy, to mention but a few. While policy makers may want to promote this net of transformation for reasons mentioned above, educationalists and

educational researchers need to have different agendas, because they need to remember the purposes of education.

Both the Outcomes and the Bildung Discourses stress developing the school culture. In the Bildung Discourse, it is often seen as the need to develop collaboration between professionals and between professionals and students in order to create inclusive and democratic communities that are open to student curiosity and critical reflections. In the Outcomes Discourse, more emphasis is placed on manuals for teacher collaboration and teaching for tests that are used to compare student outcomes.

The last function concerns cultivating and developing relations with the local community. In the Democratic Bildung Discourse, there is room for discussions and negotiations with parents and local political agents, because there is room for local interpretation of soft legislation and soft couplings. Much of this is substituted in the Outcomes Discourse by one-way information from school to community with little time or room for discussions.

Our Point of Departure

When we started the project and invited colleagues to the symposium in Copenhagen (October 2019), we had the following thoughts about the theme: We would discuss phenomena and conditions for schools and school leadership that are often forgotten in educational discourses and policies, but nevertheless are important aspects of educational and leadership practice:

a. Much educational reform is premised on normalising the idea that those who run schools are *leaders* and that their work is *leadership*. We want to critically review the situation and operate on the basis that the people who are required to be leaders, who lead and exercise leadership, are first and foremost educational professionals.

b. National authorities believe in *data driving*: learning, teaching and leadership must be based on solid data including evidence based on general standards for learning and measurements and comparisons

hereof. The *reasons* for compiling and using data are often obscure but need to be made known and discussed by researchers and practitioners.

c. If policies, routines and actions are *maladapted* to concrete school settings, leaders are forced to act and make decisions based on their personal agency and expertise rather than existing structures and frameworks. Their actions have effects on contexts outside of school, including intersections of global, local and national education policy.

d. *Relations* between material frames, organisational structures and social relations are important in both educational practice and research because the practical construction of schools as spheres of work and learning is as important as theoretical reflections.

e. Contemporary educational policies are often designed to focus on students' acquisition of basic skills, but schools *also need to focus on* themes like democracy, equity, social skills and communication, inclusion, immigration, sustainability and local cultures.

Overview of Articles

Does the Combination of Professional Leadership and Learning Management Systems Signal the End of Democratic Schooling?

Ronni Laursen, Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus, Denmark

Education of democratic citizens is a fundamental aspect of Danish primary and secondary schooling. However, policymakers push school principals' agency towards professional leadership by encouraging specific methods for assessing student learning outcomes. Enactment of a learning management system (LMS) supports the transition towards professional leadership and leads to self-regulation by all actors within schools. While supporting the professional agency of school principals, this transformation is at the expense of core elements of democratic practice. This article argues that schooling's democratic purpose tends to be forgotten in the shift towards the

professionalization of principals' agency. In this process, an LMS is a powerful tool because principals can keep track of what teachers are doing digitally at all times. The concept of professional agency is used in this article to denote how the actions of school principals become distanced from the educational practice within the schools. The article is based on a qualitative study at four schools, comprising 31 semi-structured interviews with principals, teachers, and civil servants. Bourdieu's thinking tools -field, habitus, and capital - will be used along with the concept of governmentality to explore principals' professional agency and self-regulation and to conduct a thorough analysis of practice.

Superintendents as Boundary Spanners - Facilitating Improvement of Teaching and Learning

Katarina Ståhlkrantz, Linnaeus University, Växjö, Sweden & Stephan Rapp, Linnaeus University, Kalmar, Sweden

Superintendents, functioning as the local school boards' chief executive officers, play a fundamental role in improving schools. While teachers and principals have been given a prominence in students´ learning outcomes, the perspective of superintendents as instructional leaders is often forgotten. Based on a nationwide survey of Swedish school boards the study investigates the boards' expectations of their superintendents to influence student learning outcomes. The basic research question is: How may superintendents as boundary spanners facilitate school improvement? Boundary spanning is used as a theoretical and methodological framework to explore how superintendents may facilitate the local school system to become a more tightly coupled system and strengthen the organization´s capacity of school improvement. The study's findings indicate that superintendents have significant opportunities to influence political decisions and school improvement. Superintendents may exert an indirect instructional leadership and thereby tighten the couplings between different hierarchical levels in the school system. In their boundary-spanning roles, superintendents

are expected to prioritize managerial assignments, which is a time-consuming task. Because the superintendent is not likely to be criticized or dismissed because of poor student results, windows of opportunities opens up in their entrepreneurial role, and thus a higher likelihood of working more effectively as instructional leaders.

Principal Turnover: When is it a Problem and for Whom? Mapping Out Variations Within the Swedish Case

Katina Thelin, Department of Education, Uppsala University

Principal turnover has become topic of discussion, attracting attention not only in media, but also among scholars. Research indicate that high turnover rate is problematic for several reasons. First, it jeopardises stability of school management, which is crucial for schools, not only to function well but also to develop as organisations. Second, since studies indicate that principals have an important, yet indirect, effect on student learning, it is reasonable to expect high turnover to impact negatively on both student and school performance.

The aim of the study was to map out and describe national variations in principal turnover in Sweden and thus provide a basis for practice-oriented research. To determine the level of turnover and the extent to which particular municipalities or types of municipalities are facing substantially higher turnover than others, statistical data from Statistics Sweden (SCB) were used.

Results show that the average principal has worked in the same municipality for approximately six years and changed schools less than once. Yet, results differ between different types of municipalities, i.e. metropolitan, urban, rural and sparsely populated areas. The results raise fundamental, yet often, overseen questions, namely: When and for whom is principal turnover a problem?

The First Teacher as the Elephant in the Room – Forgotten and Hidden Teacher Leadership Perspectives in Swedish Schools

Frida Grimm, Centre for Principal Development, Umeå University, Sweden

International research has highlighted teacher leadership as a means to improve teaching and learning by distributing instructional (learning-centered) leadership to teacher leaders. Simultaneously, there has been an increase and alteration of teacher leaders in schools. One example is the 'first teacher' position in Sweden implemented in 2013. The article builds on an inductive, empirical study made in four Swedish schools. I conducted 34 semi-structured interviews with teachers, first teachers, assistant principals, and principals to explore how different school actors understand first teacher leadership and how this enables and constrains the construction of teacher leadership for teaching and learning. In the analysis, I concluded that the participants understand first-teacher leadership as horizontal and facilitative. Their understanding, built on egalitarian and autonomous norms, collides with the intensions of a changed role to improve teaching and learning. The result implies a hidden first-teacher function. In the article, I argue teacher leadership, as a concept, has been forgotten in Swedish research literature and schools, even though Sweden has had teacher leaders for decades. Increased exploration of first-teacher leadership in Swedish schools can contribute to a more visualised and nuanced understanding of teacher leadership and its impact on teaching and learning.

Developing Leadership by Participating in Principal Professional Learning Communities (PPLCs) and the Added Value of Transnational Collaboration

Morten Krogstad Strand & Anne Berit Emstad NTNU, Trondheim, Norway

This article presents a case study aiming to encourage and support principals from six countries to work in Principal Professional Learning Communities (PPLCs) to enhance their leadership

competencies and foster strong leadership for school development and teacher learning. We argue that the need for principals to participate in a PLC is a fundamental but also forgotten perspective in school leadership. Our most important findings indicate that the principals participating in a PPLC gained (1) enhanced leadership skills, (2) awareness of and security in their own leadership roles, (3) new knowledge about organisation and implementation of PLCs and (4) appreciation of the importance of PLCs. An added value was the benefit of meeting peers from different countries, which contributed to their reflections about their own school systems and practices. We argue that facilitation and support is important to establishing effective PPLCs and that external support may be considered to create a structure for and to strengthen the outcomes of PPLCs. We further argue that local authorities should reinstate or restructure these meetings so that principals can focus on teaching and discuss the subject with their peers. Data for the study were collected through pre/post-surveys, in-depth interviews, reflection notes and audio recordings of workshops, world café meetings, a SWOT analysis, and group discussions.

How school leaders can gain role clarity and grow their leadership identity

Marit Aas, Fred Carlo Andersen & Kirsten Foshaug Vennebo, Department of Primary and Secondary Teacher Education, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway

Over the past decades, principals have experienced an increased pressure emanating from the responsibility for managing change and building organisations, whilst striving to improve students' learning outcomes. Leadership learning programmes appear to emphasise the requirements of the job rather than leaders' individual capabilities, moral purpose and the need to take an active role in learning. In the design of programmes, there seems to be a challenge in finding the balance between system and reform needs and school and individual needs. Despite these challenges, there is consensus in the literature that

principals and school leaders need to comprehend the macro-contextual and micro-contextual influences on their work, as well as to develop knowledge and skills to understand their schools and leadership roles. A *fundamental but often forgotten perspective* in *leadership learning programmes* is how to facilitate learning processes and help school leaders to gain role clarity and grow leadership identity. In this paper, we examine and discuss the way that newly appointed school leaders in Norway participating in a leadership learning programme can gain role clarity through investigation into role expectations and group coaching. We provide findings that shed light on aspects of how school leaders develop role clarity through taking an active role in learning within their workplaces and together with the school leaders participating in the leadership learning programme.

Editorial Comments

Four different approaches to analysing and discussing school leadership in relation to the theme of the special issue: one looks at learning management systems and relations to professional agency. Another on the functions of superintendents in relations between policy enactment on the municipal level and educational demands spanning boundaries and a third one on principal turnover and the effects hereof on education. The fourth discusses the problems of forgetting traditional teacher leadership roles in the development of leadership models and the fifth analyses the forgotten benefit of school leaders meeting peers in their learning/development processes. Finally, the sixth analyses the need to assist individual principals in managing the dilemmas of leadership practice.

Seen through those lenses it is amazing how policy makers are able to forget practical and fundamentally aspects of education and organizing when wanting to transform politics. Conflicts illuminated in this issue are related to the transformations of performance management into practice on the expense of democratic

leadership. Moreover, the articles take into account leadership dilemmas related to principal turnover, role identity and professional growth that have not been remembered in the current Nordic school governance systems.

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Does the Combination of Professional Leadership and Learning Management Systems Signal the End of Democratic Schooling?

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Abstract

Education of democratic citizens is a fundamental aspect of Danish primary and secondary schooling. However, policymakers push school principals' agency towards professional leadership by encouraging specific methods for assessing student learning outcomes. Enactment of a learning management system (LMS) supports the transition towards professional leadership and leads to self-regulation by all actors within schools. While supporting the professional agency of school principals, this transformation is at the expense of core elements of democratic practice. This article argues that schooling's democratic purpose tends to be forgotten in the shift towards the professionalization of principals' agency. In this process, an LMS is a powerful tool because principals can keep track of what teachers are doing digitally at all times. The concept of professional agency is used in this article to denote how the actions of school principals become distanced from the educational practice within the schools. The article is based on a qualitative study at four schools, comprising 31 semi-structured interviews with principals, teachers, and civil servants. Bourdieu's thinking tools -field, habitus, and capital - will be used along with the concept of governmentality to explore principals' professional agency and self-regulation and to conduct a thorough analysis of practice.

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Introduction

A fundamental perspective within Danish primary and lower secondary education concerns teaching Danish children to become active, engaged, and democratic citizens, which entails that the school's work must be characterized by freedom of spirit, equality, and democracy (Danish Ministy of Education, 2019). This has been a core value of Danish schools since the end of the Second World War and was fully enshrined in national educational policy in 1975 (The Danish Government, 1975). Ross understood democracy as a form of government based on the right of the individual, such as the right to freedom of expression (Ross, 1946); however, democracy can also be understood as a way of life (Koch, 2005/1945). A democratic approach to education, therefore, entails more than learning about individual freedoms and rights; it entails 'doing' democracy and thereby experiencing the potential challenges and dilemmas of a democratic way of life - experiences that become embedded in the body (Dewey, 2005). School principals can play an essential role in this regard by generating structures in the school as social spaces that develop democratic practice. A democratic approach to education calls for the school's organizational structure to be democratic (Biesta, 2018). However, in ministerial orders, for example, the democratic agenda has been pushed somewhat into the background. For the last ten years, the Danish Ministry of Education has been more concerned with promoting a school practice focused on measurable student learning outcomes (Danish Ministy of Education, 2014, 2015).

Welfare professions and their professionalism can be defined as a particular field of work that promotes human wellbeing and therefore requires specialized knowledge and skills (Eliot, 1994). According to Biesta, the profession's insight into the required knowledge means that professionals need to regulate themselves instead of being ruled from the outside (Biesta, 2015). In this article, I draw on a different understanding of professionalism and agency that are to be understood differently. I argue that the definition of professionalism Eliot and Biesta states is essential for welfare professions is forgotten and that the autonomy of school principals' agency is set by standards for leadership derived from new public management (NPM) (Gunter, 2016). Assessment, accountability, and standardization are part of a global wave of harmonization in the public sector (Moos & Wubbels, 2018). These core principles of NPM tend to lead to a focus on outcomes and outputs in public administration (Moos, 2017) and, within the field of education, constitute potent tools for governing and controlling teachers (Holloway, 2019). Such logics call for a more professional leader (Hall, Gunter, & Bragg, 2013) - school principals are accountable for the school's output (in the form of student achievement) and reputation, which also entails many obligations outside the school (Coupland, Currie, & Boyett, 2008). For school principals, "good" professional agency, therefore, refers to a principal who runs the school based on standards or demands from a higher organizational level and takes good care of the school's reputation.

The introduction of an LMS in Danish schools has to be understood in the light of a recent school reform and new rules governing teachers' working hours (Law 409) (Dorf, 2018). The introduction of Law 409 resulted in a lockout of Danish teachers by the KL – Local Government Denmark (the association and interest

organization of the 98 Danish municipalities). It removed the limit on the proportion of teachers' working hours spent on classroom teaching. From a teacher's point of view, the law was seen as the government controlling teachers and teaching (Andersen, Boye, & Laursen, 2018). Three issues emerged from the school reform: 1) primary and lower secondary education must challenge all students to become as proficient as possible, 2) the impact of social background on academic results must be reduced, and 3) students confidence and wellbeing must be strengthened. The political assessment of the reform is based on clear, operational, and measurable goals – e.g., that 80% of students have to perform over the middle level in the National Tests (Danish Ministy of Education, 2013). The LMS is programmed to support goal-directed teaching, which is one of the l approaches policymakers believe will ensure the reform's objectives are met (Danish Ministy of Education, 2014, 2016). An LMS is a digital system where teachers can, for instance, upload teaching materials and give students feedback on their work. It also provides a platform for digital communication with students and their parents regarding student progression. In theory, it is a tool that can change teaching radically, yet the literature on how the introduction of an LMS affects practitioners is sparse. Exceptions are two central studies the first showing that teachers are sceptical towards LMSs and the other that teachers fear that the introduction of an LMS will lead to the standardization of teaching practice (Lochner, Conrad, & Graham, 2015; Selwyn, 2011). In Denmark, policymakers had three objectives when implementing an LMS: 1) to make teaching more efficient, 2) to support goal-directed teaching, and 3) to support the digitalization of primary and lower secondary education (Local Government, 2016, 2018). The tool is to be used by teachers, and when put into service, it functions like Foucault's panopticon, a

design that allow all prisoners of an institution to be observed by a single security guard, without the inmates being able to tell whether they are being watched (Foucault, 1979), the LMS rendering the teacher's practice completely visible. The link between professional leadership and an LMS is that the political motivation for the enactment of an LMS is rooted in a belief that the specific goal-directed teaching methods supported will ensure that teachers adapt their teaching to a focus on assessments and student learning outcomes, thereby ensuring a strong assessment culture in schools, which is the currently dominant political discourse regarding excellent schooling (Danish Ministy of Education, 2014, 2016; Local Government, 2005; The Danish Government, 2006).

This article sets out to present an analysis of practice at four schools, with a particular focus on the principals' agency at these schools. The two issues addressed are professional agency and enactment of an LMS. This article will be done by applying Bourdieu's thinking tools of field, habitus, and capital (Hardy, 2015), alongside the concept of governmentality (Dean, 2004). Using the enactment of an LMS in Denmark as a case, I will examine the interplay between professional agency, an LMS, and democracy. The analysis is intended to fill a gap in the research literature regarding how the introduction of an LMS affects practice and to provide insight into school principals' agency, thereby developing an understanding of how principals produce and reproduce a specific logic through their actions. This leads to the following research question:

> *Why do school principals' professional agency and the enactment of an LMS, with its embedded notions of self-regulation, tend to neglect the fundamental role of democratic participation as a basis for educational practice?*

In the article’s first section, I will discuss Bourdieu’s thinking tools when analysing the actors within specific fields of education, as well as highlighting the benefits of combining these thinking tools with the concept of governmentality. In the second section, I will present the study's methods and data. The subsequent analysis is divided into three themes, based on which, I present my conclusions, addressing the above research question.

Theoretical Approach

This study intends to generate empirical insight into school principals’ scope for agency and how enactment of an LMS influences this agency. Bourdieu defines habitus as permanent dispositions that are predisposed to functions as structuring structures – that means logic that produces and structuring praxis and representations (Bourdieu, 2006). Habitus is what gives actors agency, and actors’ agency only makes sense in relation to other actors. Actors' preferences and positions in a social space is a product of their struggles to dominate this space and the amount of accumulated capital they can bring into it (Bourdieu, 1992).

Actors that have the “right” taste in terms of cultural capital can dominate a social space – a process that is not necessarily based on conscious actions. However, Bourdieu argues that this leads to actors accepting that something is the right taste, despite it not representing their own personal taste. As a result, certain dispositions are recognized as the right ones within a given social space, even though some of the actors in this space cannot achieve or accumulate the correct capitals to gain the recognition of others (Bourdieu, 2010). A field can be understood as relatively autonomous, which means that each field produces a specific interest and logic (Bourdieu, 1992).

However, the autonomy of the educational field is difficult to limit, and Rawolle and Lindgard argue that the educational field consists of numerous cross-field effects from other sectors and organizations such as OECD (Rawolle & Lingard, 2008). One potential challenge in fields comprised of cross-field effects is the loss of context. For example, the state, which sets the framework rules and regulations governing educational practice with universal symbolic capital that is endorsed in all contexts; however, school principals and teachers are contextually bound to a specific social space (Hardy & Lingard, 2008). Capital appears in many forms, but the most dominant analytical forms are embodied social, cultural, and economic capital (Bourdieu, 2001). Moreover, according to Bourdieu, capital can be symbolic, which means capital can be altered and transformed into other forms of capital. The transformation, however, is dependent on how "habitus" perceives the symbolic actions within a specific field. For Bourdieu, symbolic capital is capital that is not recognized as capital, but as legitimate competences, for example, honour (Bourdieu, 2006).

Habitus is Bourdieu's term for the accumulated forms of capital an actor can draw on when making a move in the social space. As such, habitus is comprised of an actor's specific dispositions through exposure to particular practices within a social space. However, this process is dialectical – through its agency, the habitus engaging in a given social space constitutes and reproduces the dispositions in this space (Bourdieu, 1992). School principals' habitus is shaped by neo-liberal discourses and practices and by standardizations processes for example as results-based management (Gunter, 2016), and thereby habitus in the educational field is associated with the likelihood of rewards and success and of having an effective practice in many different fields – the principals' success is in an interplay between the

educational, managerial, and transformational demands (Lingard & Christie, 2003).

Within criminology studies, Bourdieu's work has been combined with concepts drawn from Foucault (Schlosser, 2013; Wacquant, 2016). Bourdieu's thinking tools are intended to be used to analyse power relations between actors within a field, and his notion of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 2006) is an analytic tool to shed light on invisible domination. Foucault's concept of governmentality - particularly in terms of how individuals are held responsible for their success (Dean, 2004) - emphasizes the individual self-regulated elements embedded in the LMS. Governmentality studies stress that modern forms of government are often based on soft power relations, where actors, perhaps unconsciously, act towards, for instance, specific standards (Perryman, Ball, Braun, & Maguire, 2017). Numbers come in handy because by measuring something, you can set a standard and then measure everything else against it - the data schools can provide becomes essential (Ozga, 2009). Soft power means to cultivate power through a variety of policies; it is about getting others to voluntarily do what you want them to without any conflict (Gallarotti, 2011).

Governmentality can be defined as the organized practice through which individuals are governed. Dean emphasizes that governmentality is not only a concept for understanding how individuals are governed but also how individuals think about the way they are governed, although they do not always fully understand the governance (Dean, 2004). For Dean, the essential issue for the researcher is to analyse how policies, for example, or tools such as an LMS, make individuals act in a certain way and, by extension, consciously or unconsciously regulate their behaviour in

accordance with said tool or policy (Dean, 2004). Cuban has demonstrated that there is a considerable distance from the enactment of a specific policy to the concrete practice in a given social space (Cuban, 2013), and Rose is arguing that government by distance is policy working through delicate associations, translations, and relations (Rose, 1999). Governmentality studies focus on what happens with the policy from enactment to practice (Colebatch, 2002; Olena, 2008). Ball argues that performativity is a technology that regulates employees' judgment based on rewards and sanctions – the employee's performance is measured in terms of, e.g., the outputs they produce (Ball, 2003).

In the data I have collected, I have identified that the principals' leadership through their habitus is being sharpened by policymakers' increased demands for assessments and measurable student learning outcomes. Also, LMS is a technology that enacts NPM-logic in its programmed design, which means that LMS is governmentality-tool to steer teachers' teaching in particular directions. The LMS governmentality-logic then again sharpens the principals' habitus towards the assessments and student-learning outcome. It means that governing at a distance bridge to principals' agency in the analysis. This lens of theoretical-discovery will be followed up in the method and analysis-sections.

Methods/Data Collection

The findings in this article are generated using data consisting of in-depth semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 2007) conducted at four schools and in three municipalities with five leaders, four civil servants, and twenty-two teachers. The primary data presented is based on interviews with five school leaders. At one school, the

principal was new in the job, so the vice-principal was also interviewed to provide insight into the process surrounding the implementation of the LMS. One principal was female. All were experienced leaders, with four of them approaching retirement age. The reason for selecting experienced principals was that the topic is highly charged in Denmark, and the expectation was that experienced employees would be more likely to express themselves freely. Teachers were also interviewed to counter school principals' tendency to overvalue their own effort (Andersen, Boye, & Laursen, 2014), allowing teachers' perceptions to qualify the principals' utterances. In addition, a number of civil servants were interviewed, as being responsible for the implementation of policy, they can provide insight into how much autonomy and room for manoeuvre the school principals have. The interviews were conducted January-June 2019. In theory, the implementation of the LMS should have been completed during the collection of data, but it turned out that the four schools were each at different stages of the implementation process. The interviews were, on average, an hour.

Data were thematically analysed in two rounds of coding. In the second round, it was identified that all five leaders talked about demands from policymakers and professionalism as central working conditions for themselves and the teachers and that an LMS is a tool that can control teaching. The emerging findings were related to relevant literature, such as policy documents, Bourdieu's thinking tools, and the concept of governmentality. This study's findings are based on qualitative data – it is a theoretical construction and interpreted in light of the selected theory. The data is generated from a specific dynamic context, which means that the results of the study cannot be generalized. However, generalization is not my aim; instead, I investigate the social phenomena professional agency, self-

regulation, and democracy. As such, the analysis focuses on an exploration of how these phenomena relate to each other in the specific context of the introduction of an LMS in Danish schools and how they affect the various actors. It is not the individual actor's story that is of interest, and data will, therefore, be presented as the construction of school principals or teachers' utterances - excerpts from the data will be used to make the analysis more present.

Analysis

Three sections are the fundament for the conclusion of the article. In the first analytical section, I will show how principals′ meeting activities and the particular implementation of the LMS drive principals toward a professional agency. The argument is that principals′ habitus and thereby agency is sharpened to be managerial professionalism. The second analytical section will show how four drivers related to the enactment of the LMS lead to self-regulated behaviour for practitioners within the social space. The argument is that self-regulated behaviour amplifies the managerial professionalism and sharpens actors' habitus and agency in that light. In the last analytical section, I argue that professional agency and the programmed design in the LMS that encourage teachers to goal-instructed teaching, which means that the teaching is being harmonized, and therefore there is little time to focus education on democratic values and participation.

The Orchestration of Professional Agency

This section will present an analysis of two issues that contribute to professional agency: First, the implementation of an LMS and second, the principals' meeting activities.

All four schools in the study followed the same implementation process regarding the LMS. First of all, the municipalities drew up a number of objectives and requirements for the process, e.g., that teachers are to create their annual teaching plan in the system. The LMS was developed by private operators, who have created a manual to ensure that their product will be used properly; it is a step-by-step manual, and a governmentality technology because it is created in the sense of the intentions of the policymakers for the LMS. When implementing the LMS at the schools, the principals presented the overall objectives and requirements drawn up by the municipalities to school staff. They then strategically delegated responsibility for the process to trusted employees with excellent IT skills, familiar with the technical aspects of the LMS.

The principals' agency in the implementation process was clear: Develop objectives and requirements for the system's operation and let others do the legwork. The principals agreed that such tasks are not part of their area of expertise – they need to be delegated to others to allow the principals to concentrate on other assignments. As one principal put it:

> *"The municipality asked us to appoint three "superusers," so they could participate in some courses at the municipality, so we did that… …I have said I did not have the competence to do it because I do not use it in my everyday life – it is entirely natural that it is those three that have organized it (Principal A)."*

However, one problem with the distributed leadership approach is that the teachers know that trusted employees do not have any formal authority regarding the LMS. When teachers experience something that, in their opinion, does not make sense, they want to talk to their principals about the problem. The teachers' rationale is that it is the principal who can make changes. The

teachers’ experience was that the principal gave strategic, professional answers reflecting the official policy, e.g., that LMS makes it easier to reuse teaching in another context. Nevertheless, from the teachers' point of view, the problem is that material still needs to be prepared if it is to be reused. This demonstrates how principals try to tone down a potential conflict between different positions in the social space by drawing on accumulated capital to convince teachers that LMS is still working.

All five leaders stated they took part in many meetings both in- and outside the school.

> *“Most of my days are packed with meetings … … I would say that probably 70% of my meetings take place at the school, which means with employees, board members, but also external partners (Principal A).”*

To reinforce the principals' perception of many meetings, a new survey conducted by the Danish Association of School Principals found that school principals use, on average, 46% of their working hours on administrative tasks (School Principal Association, 2020). The principals in this study stated that they attend many meetings with different educational stakeholders. While this might include, for example, meetings with parents to address a conflict about student grades, much of their time is spent preparing and holding meetings on how to translate municipal policy into school practice. In addition, they often participate in seminars organized by the municipality centred on the implementation of policy. The data also showed that principals accumulate capital by seeking to influence strategic participation in municipality council or the union for principal, which reinforce their meeting activities. Principals' meeting activities helps them accumulate capital, which they can draw on in other context but also call for a tool to steer teachers from a distance.

When encountering a problem, teachers stated that they often found the principal was not available to discuss the issue because he or she was in a meeting or not at the school at all. As one teacher stated: *"Our principal is often not here … we (the teachers) do not know what he is doing (Teacher A)."* Most of the 22 teachers in the dataset regard it as a problem that the principal does not have time to discuss their issues, even though the teachers do state that the principal finds time in his or her schedule when there is a serious conflict, for instance with a student. The teachers do not want to be monitored by the principal, but they expect principals to be highly aware of what goes in the classroom as part of everyday teaching practice so they can offer support when problems occur. By the accumulated capital meetings sharpen the principals' habitus and professional agency – they are aware, for example, of their role in the social space as the auxiliary arm of policymakers, which means they know they are accountable for policy demands, and doing the work of government at a distance. In this strategic game, the principals play strategically and are loyal to policy when in social spaces away from city hall. When disagreeing with policy, their strategy is to keep the disagreement between themselves and the policymakers. One principal explained:

> *"even though you do not agree with the inherent purpose of control, you implement with respect for the legislation – you have to do that, otherwise you fail as a leader. When a law is enacted, I act like a civil servant and implement it (Principal B)."*

In this sense, meetings generate the logic within the social space, and the principal through he/she agency reproduces this logic, for example, when drawing up policy-decided objectives and requirements for an LMS.

The school principals want to be close to teaching. However, they are frequently away from the school, for example attending meetings about school policy at city hall. When they have to implement a tool such as the LMS that will potentially radically change teaching, they delegate responsibility to others. Consequently, they do not understand the premise of the tool and, therefore, cannot support the teachers' practice. These two examples show how the shift towards managerial professionalism distances principals from teaching practice at the school. Instead, the data indicate that principals' agency is professional. Thereby, the principals' accumulate capital from the political field and their habitus produce and reproduce the dominant professional logics within the school – for instance, that data and assessment in terms of the goal-directed teaching method embedded in the LMS are crucial to student progress. The link between professional agency and the LMS, as well as how the LMS, when used, produces self-regulated behaviour, will be further explored in the next section.

Four Drivers of Self-regulated Behaviour

This section will examine how four aspects of implementing an LMS will, in theory, lead to self-regulated behaviour, and how the LMS is an essential tool for principals' professional agency. For the principals, one of the goals in using an LMS is:

> *"for us (management at the school), the goal with the platform is to ensure a strong assessment culture. We need a tool that can help us document that we improve student learning outcomes (Principal C)."*

Besides implementing a tool with lots of embedded political issues, the principals were aware of some technical difficulties with the LMS. Many of the teachers interviewed were sceptical towards the LMS and saw it as part of the unpopular school reform and law

409, but also that many teachers initially preferred using Google-classroom because it is more intuitive. The principals, therefore, found the implementation process difficult at the beginning. However, as one principal stated: *"the LMS is, in fact, an easier way to plan (teaching) while also documenting that learning is taking place (Principal D)."* This means that the principals might be aware of potential conflicts embedded in the LMS, but their professional-habitus telling them it a tool that lightens teachers' workload and places the focus on assessment. In the data, meanwhile, it is clear that before self-regulated behaviour could be established at the school level, policymakers had to use direct force and enforce a top-down process with clear goals and demands. The teachers in the study did not use the LMS voluntarily, and the LMS can only act as a self-regulated instrument if practitioners use it. As already–mentioned, policymakers embedded a particular structure for the enactment of the LMS. This structure is, of course, something principals have to ensure teachers implement. They, therefore, inform the teachers that this is a requirement that he/she must meet - with structures within the schools, making it very difficult for any failing to do so.

> *"Teamwork is the place for development and help… As leaders, we have to draw up expectations and a structure for this teamwork. We want our teams to be units that ask themselves if we are solving the task properly (Principal E)."*

Instead of continually reiterating requirements, the school principals organize the work within collaborative communities where teachers work together, for example, when developing the annual teaching plan. Being part of a team requires that teachers work within the LMS. As one principal put:

> *"Then there were four courses that should be prepared in the LMS, and they were reused in connection with professional learning communities, so we had*

the link between professional learning communities and the LMS (Principal D)."

Secondly, at one of the schools, the data in the LMS is an essential part of the process when teachers hand over a class to a colleague (with the other three schools working to implement a similar system). Storing data within the LMS makes it accessible to the new teacher, who can thereby see what the class has been working on and the work the previous teacher has done. If a teacher does not put his or her work on the platform, colleagues cannot build on this work. The aspect of governmentality that leads the teachers to a self-regulated behaviour is that the teachers' autonomy is shrunken, so if they do not want to be controlled by the principals all the time works on the LMS and programmed-design for teaching. If the teacher does not want to be a bad colleague, then again needs to work on the LMS. A principal explained, *"they (teacher in the team) expected him (a teacher) to deliver the item because they deliver it themselves (Principal B)."* The goal is to sharpen teachers habitus in light of the wished self-regulated behaviour, so they in their agency produces and reproduces a self-regulated behaviour in accordance with the dominant logic of assessment and use of data in teaching.

Thirdly – and this is, as the enactment of the LMS, a combination of direct and soft power. The school principals use annual staff development reviews to address teachers' work on the LMS. At first, the review is direct power because staff does not have a choice whether to participate or not. Even though there is a power relation between principal and teacher, the review becoming soft power relations if it is a success in terms of the principal convinces the teacher the benefits of the review. Is it a success, it is a common-development conversation where principal and teachers agree on

shared focal points for the teacher and hiding the power structures embedded in the review. As part of this dialogue, there is an expectation from the principals that teachers present their work; for example, in the form of one of the exemplary pedagogical teachings, which is a demand that teachers have to make. Exemplary teaching is a teaching course based on data and student assessment. One principal explicitly states that the implicit agenda with the review is to make sure the teachers use the platform: *"you do not need to do extra work, just bring what you have to do on the platform to the review (Principal D)."* There are three aspects of the annual staff development review that lead to self-regulated behaviour regarding the use of LMS among teachers. First, teachers know that the LMS will be discussed – the teacher, therefore, has the option to either ignore it and take the heat or play along and do the exemplary teaching. Most teachers choose the latter. Second, exemplary teaching is expected to involve goal-directed teaching or other forms of teaching that use data and student assessment. Again, the teachers know what is expected of them and can regulate their actions accordingly. Third, the review often ends with an agreement concerning what the teacher has to work on for the next year - both more generally and in terms of the LMS. From principals point of view, a successful review, on the one hand, turns teachers habitus towards assessments through the exemplary teaching, and at the same time encourage to further self-regulated behaviour by voluntarily setting up measurable goals for the teachers' practice, which can be evaluated in the next review.

The fourth and final aspect of school practice linked to self-regulation is the visibility embedded in the LMS. All relevant parties can monitor a student's progression, test scores, well-being, assessments by teachers, and so forth. Although organizational

demands such as the student plan are being used to ensure the teachers using the LMS – a principal stated:

> *"employees work within the framework, and we support it, and we talk about it when we think there is a problem, but we do not accept that you do not work with it (the LMS). However, we do not look over our shoulders, checking all the time; we control things like the annual plan and grades. Grades - it's not even control; we detect it if things are not done right, and I get fed up when they are not done right (Principal D)."*

It is a requirement that student grades are inputted in the LMS, so the school administration is alerted if a teacher forgets to report a student's grades. What is more, the school has the right to share the information embedded in the LMS, such as individual student plans, with other parties who might find it relevant for their job, e.g., the school psychologist. The panopticon-technology means that teachers can never know when another party may want to see what is going on in the LMS. The possibility of being watched is what encourages self-regulation. Principals are very much aware of this possibility and address it explicitly in the interviews. Although, they clearly stated that this is not something they did – and none of the teachers had experienced this form of control. Nevertheless, the school principals argued that the possibility is there and will be utilized if necessary – in other words, if they "hear on the grapevine" that a teacher is performing poorly.

Each of the four aspects of self-regulation outlined above relates to specific teaching practices. The top-down implementation with particular requirements, the principals' agency, and the programmed design of the LMS all lead to the logical consequence of teachers' self-regulation. Teaching practice becomes harmonized and instrumental, which means that students experience the same method for teaching in all subjects and at all grades. Once the LMS is used, it activates

programmed steering-techniques as architecture for reshaping task and relations in education. The logic behind harmonized and instrumental teaching shape teachers' and principals' habitus, meaning that they produce and reproduce these logics in their practice. Although teachers might be critical of the LMS and the growth of a culture of assessment, teachers' performance is measured through their ability to successfully practice specific teaching methods, for example, during annual staff development reviews. The fact is that principals' professional agency distances them from everyday school practice. In this light, the LMS becomes a perfect, powerful tool for school principals to ensure a specific teaching practice by allowing them to monitor what is going on in the classroom digitally – steering by distance.

The Tendency to Forget the Schools' Role as a Key Democratic Institution

The data shows that principals' professional agency and the self-regulation of teachers caused by the LMS are linked and lead to the proliferation of specific teaching methods, resulting in instrumental and harmonized teaching. In the following, these aspects will be analysed in terms of how they affect democratic schooling. In the dataset, professional agency and the LMS have intended or unintended consequences for democratic schooling.

Firstly, the LMS is designed to support an instrumental, goal-directed approach to teaching. The principals are accountable to the municipalities for ensuring such an approach is embedded in school practice. Hence, they are accountable for what happens within the local school space. However, it is a complicated matter. The teachers do feel pressured by principals to practice this specific approach to teaching. However, the implementation of the recent school reform

and law 409, resulting in a greater number of lessons and less time to prepare for these lessons, also plays a key role in this regard. All 22 teachers I interviewed state that they use goal-directed teaching because it offers a ready-made and fully baked solution that is only one click away. Related to the lack of time to prepare lessons, one teacher explained: *"Often, you just use a portal, and then you do what is on the portal (Teacher B)."* However, this gives the school principals another chance to support the use of the LMS and goal-directed teaching; it simply – or at least that is the school principals' argument - saves the teachers time. One might say that this view of practice is in complete alignment with the Danish Ministry of Education's notion of how Danish primary and lower secondary education should be governed. However, many of the teachers in the study added their teaching had become worse since the reform and implementation of LMS because they now just tell students to click on a webpage and complete the assignments there. Most of the teachers regard digital platforms for teaching as highly instrumental due to their instructional design. Instrumental teaching means that students know precisely what is expected of them after every lesson and what comprises the lesson's specific content. The problem from the perspective of democratic schooling is that pressure from school principals and a lack of time to prepare lessons mean that such methods constitute the majority of teaching among the interviewed teachers – methods that do not enhance or encourage students' critical and innovative thinking (Biesta, 2018). The programmed technical architecture leads to a reduction of teaching to those activities that can be captured in measurable quantitative form.

All principals explicitly mentioned that the demands from "above" are increasing and becoming more detailed. One principal stated:

"We do have the autonomy to create our vision/policy for the school. However, I feel we are being measured on some very specific matters - which do not always make sense. We are accountable for some simple issues and are being measured on that. Final student grades, national test scores, and student wellbeing scores (Principal E)."

The increase in detailed demands from policymakers is part of the professionalization of school structures and principals' habitus and agency (Courtney & Gunter, 2015). The specific demands for measuring student learning progress in, e.g., national test scores narrow down principals' autonomy to sharpen the school from their own believes. They are civil servant that has to deliver a specific result. They accumulate capital from meeting with policymakers and encourage teachers to use, e.g., goal-directive teaching to ensure student results. In that process LMS is a tool underlying self-regulated behaviour in terms of the above mention teaching method. If the self-regulated behaviour is a success – and none of the teachers in the data feel that they are being controlled by their principal, which could indicate self-regulations. It then means teachers in their habitus and agency also produce and reproduce the notion of, e.g., goal-directive teaching, which harmonizing teaching, so the students experience the same sort of teaching in most lessons. It means that the principals in his/her habitus are disposed of for professional agency rather than to generate core democratic structures. If the principal were to prioritize such structures, he/she would in conflict with policymakers' approach to schooling. Furthermore, it is challenging to implement "learning by doing" and participatory democracy in schools because of the detailed demands from policymakers. A democratic schooling approach is based on student participation and is a prerequisite for socializing students to becoming democratic citizens (Dewey, 2005). Being socialized into a progressive,

democratic society involves learning about different cultures and values (Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004; Zemon, 1998).

Conclusion

Teaching students to become democratic citizens is a core task of primary and lower secondary education in Denmark. However, the data in this study shows that this task tends to be neglected in school principals' agency. The article presents a three-pronged analysis of: 1) the pressures on school principals to act professionally, 2) how the enactment of an LMS leads to self-regulation by teachers, and 3) what these two factors mean for a democratic approach to schooling.

The data in this study demonstrates that principals experience pressure from policymakers at different levels. Policymakers make specific demands concerning student outcomes and encourage school principals to apply to particular methods, such as goal-directed teaching, to ensure these demands are met. Requirements are focused on student learning outcomes. This means that policymakers limit the school principals' autonomy in the school as social space while, at the same time, determining which logic should dominate this space and, by extension, the practice of teaching. Analysing the data shows that the school principals in the study adopted this logic, thereby reproducing it in the social spaces where they are the dominant actor, embedding demands for goal-directed teaching, for example, in the structures of the social spaces of the school. Teachers' autonomy is thereby limited by the demands emanating from a culture based on assessment and clear goals for student learning, structuring the organization of the school in alignment with official policies. Once

that LMS is in use it is a tool that is programmed to support the official policies

However, it is important to stress that most of the participants in this study underlined the vital role of democratic schooling where the teaching is organized so that students learning by doing and develop their critical thinking skills. All five leaders in the study support this view. As such, it is the agency of the various actors, rather than their beliefs that has implications for democratic schooling. It is the way policymakers structure the school as social space, which leaves little room for principals' autonomy in structuring educational practice, in turn leaving little room for teachers' autonomy. However, it is important to underline that the data shows that this is a very complicated process with many explanations for the structuring of the school as a social space. Not only principals' professional agency, but also the recent school reform and law 409-push teachers towards safe options in the form of ready-made goal-directed teaching materials available from online teaching portals.

The data shows the implementation of the schools was based on a top-down approach, both pressuring teachers to use the LMS and shaping their habitus according to the logic of goal-directed teaching. The first action is based on accumulated power in the social space: Policymakers set up demands for how to use the LMS, the municipalities translate and create more and new demands to the principals, which then again translate and set up demands for teachers. When a policy is enacted, the translation-process can lose original thoughts of the law, in the case of the LMS, there is a straight line from what policymakers demand and the principals' demands toward the teacher. The principals support the political notion that a

strong assessment-culture within the school is a necessity. None of those interviewed in the study express support for instrumental teaching – but the logic and habitus sharpening in a specific social space in terms of, for instance, lack of preparation time means that instrumental teaching is seen as a necessity. The enactment of the LMS plays the same role in structuring the social space as the principals' professional agency – it is a powerful tool to exercise a specific logic in the space. It is a powerful tool because the embedded programmed design reproduces this logic, reinforcing the centrality of goal-directed teaching and assessment through the options the LMS provides. It means, on the one hand, that the programmed design limited teachers' autonomy because it subscribes to ready-made goal-directed teaching and collection of data on student progress. At the same time, teachers' habitus is sharpened in that light, which means teachers in their agency are reproducing policymakers' thoughts of education.

The data indicates that there are two mutually dependent logics embedded in the LMS that sharpen principals' and teachers' habitus to self-regulation and sharpen principals' and teachers' habitus.

The initial analysis shows that the enactment of an LMS is not an example of soft power, for instance, by providing incentives encouraging the use of specific teaching methods, but of top-down hard power, enforcing its use. Nevertheless, once the LMS has been integrated within school practice, and its logic starts to shape the habitus of the various actors, the concept of governmentality can help understand such processes. Firstly, the evidence shows how the visibility of the LMS and its embedded approach to teaching shape the actor's habitus and agency in accordance with the dominant political logic. Secondly, it shows how that leads school principals to

focus on the use of the LMS to optimize teachers' professional development – primarily evident in annual staff development reviews, where teachers are held accountable for their work on the LMS and their individual development plans.

Two reservations must be stressed. The theory is used to interpret self-regulation within a particular context, and therefore does not indicate how the LMS will affect self-regulation in the future. It is a theoretical construct offering a plausible explanation of the phenomenon. Second, two teachers in the study present a direct challenge to the concept as they had not been using the LMS and had no intention of doing so until the principal finds out.

To summarize, the analysis presented in this article shows that a combination of professional agency and the intended and unintended consequences of the enactment of an LMS has resulted in a tendency to neglect democratic schooling in school principals' agency. A prerequisite for success for successful democratic schooling is that schools base their values on the recognition of diversity and their practice on critical thinking and democratic activity so that students experience everyday democratic life as embedded in their habitus. While school principals accept the importance of such an approach, this is not reflected in their agency – mainly because the political field dictates two dominant logics governing primary and lower secondary education: goal-directed teaching and ensuring a strong assessment culture. These logics are instrumental as they are reproduced in the principals' agency and thereby embedded in the organizational structures of the school, leaving little room for the practice of democratic agency among other school actors.

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Superintendents as Boundary Spanners - Facilitating Improvement of Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

Superintendents, functioning as the local school boards' chief executive officers, play a fundamental role in improving schools. While teachers and principals have been given a prominence in students´ learning outcomes, the perspective of superintendents as instructional leaders is often forgotten. Based on a nationwide survey of Swedish school boards the study investigates the boards' expectations of their superintendents to influence student learning outcomes. The basic research question is: How may superintendents as boundary spanners facilitate school improvement? Boundary spanning is used as a theoretical and methodological framework to explore how superintendents may facilitate the local school system to become a more tightly-coupled system and strengthen the organization´s capacity of school improvement. The study's findings indicate that superintendents have significant opportunities to influence political decisions and school improvement. Superintendents may exert an indirect instructional leadership and thereby tighten the couplings between different hierarchical levels in the school system. In their boundary-spanning roles, superintendents are expected to prioritize managerial assignments, which is a time-consuming task. Because the

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superintendent is not likely to be criticized or dismissed because of poor student results, windows of opportunities opens up in their entrepreneurial role, and thus a higher likelihood of working more effectively as instructional leaders.

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Introduction

Educational leadership can be identified on different levels and in various shapes in the school system. Whereas normally the concept of leadership is associated with teachers and principals, it can also refer to leadership and management of pedagogical activities at the national and district level, i.e., by national agencies and superintendents (Uljens & Ylimäki, 2015). Educational leadership, on these different levels in the school system, has a fundamental role in school improvement (Honingh, Ruiter & Thiel, 2018).

Hence, this means that both the local school board and its chief executive officer i.e., the superintendent, are very important in school development. Both are parts of a vertical governing chain and can influence (act as "boundary spanners") both upwards and downwards in the school system. In their roles as boundary spanners and through boundary-spanning activities, superintendents are assumed to be able to exert an indirect instructional leadership and thereby strengthen connections between different hierarchical levels in the school system.

Boundary spanning has been used as the theoretical framework in several studies about leadership on the micro-level in specific schools (Bradshaw, 1999; Coldren & Spillane, 2007; Goldring, 1990;

Millward & Timperley, 2010). Studies with a boundary-spanning perspective on educational leadership at the macro-level are, however, rare. It is that void that this study attempts to address. Based on a study of Swedish local school boards' expectations of superintendents (Rapp, Aktas & Ståhlkrantz, 2020), this study aims to develop a theoretical understanding of how superintendents as boundary spanners may facilitate the improvement of teaching and learning. Its research question is: How may superintendents as boundary spanners facilitate school improvement?

As its starting point, the study ascertains the Swedish school boards´ expectations of their superintendents to influence student achievements and in the coming section then the role of the superintendent is ascertained. Subsequently, a theoretical and methodological framework is presented and, in conclusion, outcomes are discussed.

The Superintendent

Although there are differences between school boards, not only between but also within countries, superintendents´ roles and working conditions nevertheless are generally comparable (Addi-Raccha, 2015). Superintendents all over the world share, for instance, a commitment to devolve responsibility for education to municipalities and school boards (Björk, Johansson, & Bredeson, 2014). From a transnational perspective, globalization has enabled educators to create a common international context and to nurture shared patterns of thinking (Björk et al., 2014; Sundberg & Wahlström, 2012). Policy changes and the New Public Management movement have during the recent decades increased the scope,

complexity and intensity of the superintendent's role (Björk et al., 2014).

Superintendents are now confronted by complex, fragmented and difficult demands since they are expected to sort out contradictions between goals, expectations, needs and resources (Risku, Kanervo & Björk, 2014). As a result of transnational transfers of educational reforms, superintendents in almost all countries are trying to find a balance in the interplay and conflicting demands between centralization and decentralization, which can be described as "a Gordian knot of centralized government control over education and strengthen local representative democracy" (Björk et al., 2014, p. 469).

The superintendents´ roles have also become more political, since different stakeholders, politicians and media challenge education changes at the local level (Björk et al., 2014). As a result, superintendents have seemingly become more politically astute. Thus, we can assume that micro-politics is a critical dimension of superintendents´ leadership. The micro-political processes and structures (i.e., management decisions, school board policies, academic programs and instructional practices) will define the school district´s political culture, "which may account for stability and resistance to change as well as the district's capacity successfully to implement educational reforms" (Björk et al., 2014, p. 470). The micro-political culture (involving patterns of interests, ideologies, decision-making and power distribution as well as ideologies, interests, power sources, and networks) exerts a powerful influence on the capacity to implement educational reforms and meet expectations for outcomes.

2.1. The Superintendent's Role in the Educational System

The term "loose coupling" can be used to describe the absence of agreement between members of an organization about the outcomes that they seek and the prescribed ways these outcomes should be reached (Weick, 1976). When there are ambiguous goals and no consensus about how these goals might be implemented, the organization can be described as a loosely-coupled system. An example of this would be a school in which, whilst espousing improving student achievement as its goal, its principal and teachers do not collect, analyze or use achievement data to review and refine its teaching and learning programs (Millward & Timperley, 2009). A tightly-coupled school, on the other hand, is a school where the principal and teachers are firmly focused on improving the achievement of students. There is a clear focus on developing teaching and learning programs that "identified and addressed the needs of the learners, constantly monitored their performance by measuring the students' learning, and adjusted teaching programs as necessary to continuously enhance achievement" (p. 142). In a tightly-coupled school system every decision, whether it involved the recruitment of staff or the purchasing of resources, focusses on how these decisions could enhance the learning outcomes of students.

2.2. The Superintendent – A manager in a Political Organization

Through New Public Management reforms in the public sector, expectations of superintendents, as well as principals, has increasingly been based on managerial ideals, at the expense of pedagogical leadership responsibilities (i.e., leading and managing student learning and school development) (Jarl, Fredriksson & Persson, 2012; Risku et al., 2014). Moos, Paulsen, Johansson and Risku (2016) argue similarly that the political expectations of

superintendents nowadays are concerned primarily with management issues and assessment of resources and outcomes. As a consequence of increased demands on superintendents to serve as managers, a variety of tasks have been distributed to principals and teachers (Björk et al., 2014; Risku et al., 2014).

Superintendents are crucial to the educational work and good governance of schools (Hardy & Salo, 2018). Uniquely positioned in the chain of governance, superintendents are well-placed to “connect the top apex of the municipality (i.e., school district) organization with the operating level of schools” (Paulsen, 2014, p. 407). The superintendent´s leadership role is quite complex (Björk et al., 2014). Superintendents work in a highly political system with varying local contexts and across multiple fields with many different stakeholders (Hardy & Salo, 2018; Johansson & Nihlfors, 2014; Paulsen, 2014; Paulsen, Johansson, Moos, Nihlfors & Risku, 2014; Rapp, 2011). The superintendent is thereby placed at the interface between political and professional demands and the responsibilities towards school principals and teachers. The superintendent’s position can further be contextualized as in the “crossfire” between state demands for external control and the demands of local politicians for autonomy and democracy (Paulsen et al., 2014). Superintendents in practice are forced to perform a balancing act.

Although superintendents under the Education Act stipulations have the same mission and responsibilities, because of local contexts, cultures and politics there is a variety of ways that Swedish superintendents actually work in their local school districts/municipalities (Johansson & Nihlfors, 2014). In Sweden, superintendents experience high levels of autonomy and a great deal of discretion in defining their own priorities and duties. They do not

perceive that politicians interfere in their work and enjoy considerable autonomy (Johanssson & Nihlfors, 2014).

Even if superintendents have a crucial role in the success of implementing educational reforms and school improvement, the impact of the local specific context cannot be neglected (Honingh et al., 2018). The superintendent´s capacity to make a difference is dependent on multiple and diverse factors such as cultural norms and values of the society, the external milieu, their personalities and the organizational context (Björk et al., 2014). Differences between school boards, in turn, have an impact on how the superintendent interprets and implements educational reform policies as well as the superintendent´s role and daily work.

2.3. The Superintendent and the School Board

Over the last decades school governance has become increasingly decentralized, which has resulted in a stronger emphasis on local school boards' responsibilities for managing schools (Honingh et al., 2018). Responsible for guaranteeing quality, monitoring results and intervening if needed, school boards have a central position in educational governance. Although boards are accountable for the performance of their schools, there seems to be little evidence of a relation between school boards and educational quality (Honingh et al., 2018). The boards possible influence is essentially indirect, whereas the superintendent´s function is key to school improvement by "keeping the board aligned to all that takes place in the school" (p. 11). The connection between the school board and superintendent is however of great importance, due to students´ learning outcomes (Honingh et al. 2018).

Even though evidence about school and student performance has been more transparent and more easily available and even though parents and other stakeholders have become more demanding regarding educational quality, school improvement has not been a priority on school boards´ agenda. Furthermore, the boards do not appear to have high expectations of superintendents concerning school improvement and improvement of teaching and learning (Rapp et al., 2020). We get a completely different picture when the superintendents themselves are asked to state what they think the school boards expect should be their most important assignments. Outcomes from the nationwide study conducted by Johansson and Nihlfors (2014) showed that almost all Swedish superintendents think that school improvement is the school boards' highest-ranked expectation and they themselves consider leadership activities dealing with school improvement to be their most important assignment, emphasizing the focus on enhancing the quality of teaching. Superintendents´ perception of their role as instructional leaders seems then to be clear (Johansson & Nihlfors, 2014). According to Johansson and Nihlfors´ study, regarding educational decision-making, superintendents perceive the school board chairperson to be the most influential individual in the municipality. The next most influential individual in the decision-making process, according to the superintendents, were themselves. To some extent, the superintendents also viewed principals as being influential in school boards´ educational decisions.

2.4 The Superintendent as a Middle-manager

Superintendents have an important role and function as serving as a link between the school board and the local schools. A main function for the superintendent is to filter and mediate between

political and administrative managers, on one side, and educational professional practitioners, especially principals and teachers, on the other. In their role as gatekeepers, superintendents mediate, filter and buffer expectations and demands from national school authorities and the district administration and politicians, in order to select the kind of external demands that should be prioritized and matched with internal resources. Despite "messages" from "upper levels" in the school steering system, it is not clear that these demands are imposed on schooling in practical life (Paulsen et al., 2014). As mediators, superintendents may "alleviate resistance to change" (Björk et al., 2014, p. 471). Buffering is an important mediating strategy for superintendents as middle managers. Through buffering, they are able to meet principals´ and teachers´ expectations of shielding that they will shield them from outside demands and pressures. One such example is superintendents buffering school professionals' demands for parental involvement (Paulsen et al., 2014).

From their mediating and middle-managing position, superintendents operate the external boundaries of the organization (Paulsen, 2014), making sense of the various and complex demands imposed on schools by external agencies in order to fit the schools' needs and goals. They have a coordinating and organizing role too, through mediating, negotiating and interpreting connections (Paulsen, 2014). Superintendents can also be referred to as gatekeepers with the power to select, and protect against, internal or external demands and pressure (Paulsen, 2014). Through their gatekeeping power, superintendents may decide that some incoming information or demands can be locked out, while others can be admitted. Gatekeeping, by selecting and protecting, is important for organizational learning, since the gatekeeper identifies what

information is relevant and then determines and prioritises what is on the agenda in the organization (Tushman & Katz, 1980; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981).

2.5. The Superintendent and Instructional Leadership

Focusing on the improvement of teaching and learning, instructional leadership plays a pivotal role in school improvement (Coldren & Spillane, 2007; Hallinger, 2005; Seashore Louis & Robinson, 2012). The practice of instructional leadership involves a variety of instructional activities such as developing a shared instructional vision of improved learning outcomes for students, monitoring students' learning and teachers' instructional practices and promoting professional learning of staff (Coldren & Spillane, 20017; Millward & Timperley, 2009; Robinson, 2007).

From a simple description of the principal´s role, the concept of instructional leadership now has moved to a multi-level and multi-dimensional understanding (Björk, 1993). With educational leadership activities directly involved with teachers, through classroom observations, feedback to teachers, discussion of results and teacher-learning leadership, principals can exert a direct instructional leadership, while superintendents, on the other hand, exert an indirect instructional leadership (Robinson et al., 2011). Building the capacity of instructional leadership is thus a key responsibility for superintendents as well as principals.

Strong instructional leadership from principals seems to be related to a strong and collaborative instructional focus from district offices (Seashore Louis & Robinson, 2012). Research studies in instructional-effective schools indicate that superintendents use their "bureaucratic" positions in the formal organization to improve

instruction (Björk, 1993). Through a broad range of activities such as staff selection, principal supervision, establishing clear instructional goals, monitoring instruction and financial planning for instruction to improve instruction, superintendents enact an indirect instructional role.

The superintendent's role has thus been discussed from different perspectives and we will go further and present the study's theoretical and methodological framework.

Theoretical and methodological framework

Emphasising the importance of social, historical and educational policy context, national as well as global, this study is based on a critically interpretive approach within curriculum theory.

Governance of the school system, within the curriculum theory framework, can be illustrated as a chain of governance with different levels and arenas (Johansson, Nihlfors & Jervik Steen, 2014; Lindensjö & Lundgren, 2000). The critical approach is directed further towards power relations and the role of politics in governance.

The position of the superintendent in the school governance system can be regarded as an important link in an extensive network of different specialised stakeholders (Nihlfors & Johansson, 2013). Superintendents are in the front line of the political system and their working conditions can thus be looked upon as politically created (Lundgren, 1986; Moos & Paulsen, 2014). The historical and social context has a central role in shaping the superintendent´s leadership role and leadership practice (Coldren & Spillane, 2007). In this study boundary spanning is used as a theoretical and methodological framework exploring school governance at a meso-level and

analysing the complexity of the superintendent´s role in the school´s chain of governance.

3.1. Boundary Spanning

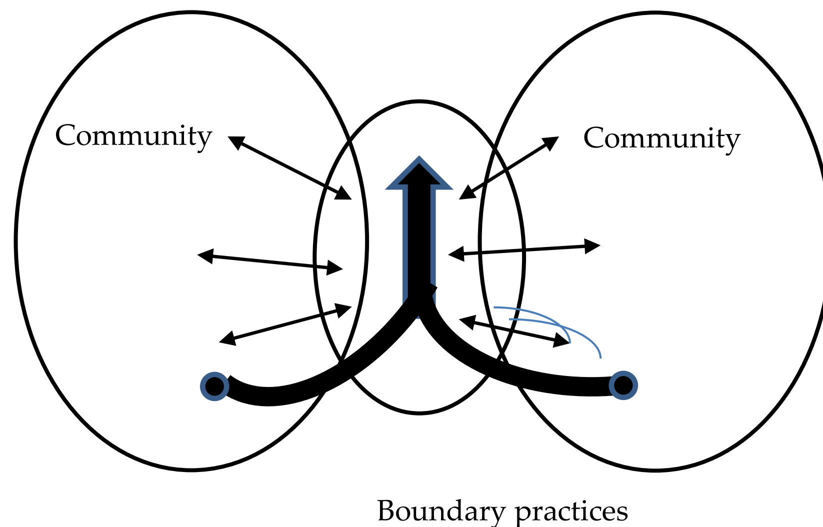
Boundary spanning is used as a theoretical and methodological framework to explore how superintendents in their role as boundary spanners, and through their boundary-spanning activities, may facilitate the local school system to become a more tightly-coupled system and strengthen the organization´s capacity for improvement of teaching and learning. A distinction is hence made between "boundary spanners" and "boundary spanning". Boundary spanning is looked upon as a set of activities, processes and practices whereas boundary spanners refers to individuals undertaking boundary-spanning activities (Williams, 2010).

Building on Wenger (1998), we find in the school system different "communities of practices" that share histories of learning. While these communities of practice create boundaries, they also develop ways to create and maintain connections to the external environment and other communities of practice. Superintendents can participate in multiple communities of practice at once. Superintendents are members of the district´s administrative leadership team as well as their own leadership team with the principals. This kind of "multi-membership" inherently has the potential of creating various forms of continuity across the boundaries of the practices involved (Wenger, 1998). Connections as boundary objects (e.g., documents, concepts and other artifacts) and boundary activities make it possible for different communities of practice to influence each other. Through boundary spanning these activities and objects can be used to traverse boundaries, making and sustaining connections between practices (Wenger, 1998). The

practice itself can, as a boundary practice, also become a connection. Boundary practices are routines that sustain connections between different communities of practice or constituencies (e.g., teachers and principals) and provide an ongoing forum for mutual engagement in some activity (Wenger, 1998).

Figure 1.

Boundary practices according to Wenger (1998).



3.2. Boundary Spanners

The local school district may as an organization be viewed as an open system (Addi-Raccah, 2015). Within this open system there are individuals holding boundary-spanning roles, crossing internal boundaries and/or external environment boundaries and serving as connections between different constituencies (Wenger, 1998). The organizational boundaries are permeable and function as filters that screen inputs and outputs. The main function of boundary spanners

is thus to manage the permeability of the boundaries (Goldring, 1990). Boundary spanners facilitate transferences across boundaries and build relationships, interconnections and interdependencies across boundaries in order to manage complex problems (Williams, 2002). In their significant role as "cognitive filters", boundary spanners help members of the organization to interpret the prevailing context and help shape the perceptions and preferences of others (Williams, 2010). Boundary spanners also serve as a vital link between the organization and the environment as they filter environmental perceptions and interpretations. The school's external environment includes parents, community members, school district personnel, government agencies and other external entities upon which the school relies for many of its resources (Ng, 2013). Boundary role incumbents, as superintendents, represent their organizations to the larger environment not only in such tasks as acquiring resources, but also by maintaining and improving political legitimacy, and enhancing the organization's image and social legitimacy (Aldrich & Herker, 1976; Goldring, 1990). By scanning the environment for new technological developments, innovations in organizational design and relevant trends in related fields, boundary personnel also may contribute to innovation and change.

Boundary role occupants manage relations between the organization and environment through "buffering and bridging" (Goldring, 1990, p. 53). Information processing is one crucial buffering strategy, which can be defined as: "An organization's ability to adapt to environmental contingencies depends in part on the expertise of boundary role incumbents in selecting, transmitting, and interpreting information originating in the environment" (Aldrich & Herker, p. 219). By controlling the flow of information in and out of the organization, a boundary spanner assumes the role of

"gatekeeper" (Goldring, 1990). Since the organization relies upon their expertise and discretion, the gatekeepers' role implies a position of power (Aldrich & Herker, 1976). Boundary spanners are through their boundary roles exposed to large amounts of potentially relevant information and serve a dual function, acting as both filters and facilitators (Aldrich & Herker, 1976). As boundary spanners are responsible for regulating, processing and transmitting the information flowing from the environment to the organization and vice versa, boundary spanners are in the position to filter this information "by storing it, delaying it, acting on it, or referring it, in order to buffer external elements from the organization" (Goldring, 1990, p. 53). They further direct it to the organizational units that need it. Since the information that filters into the organization through boundary positions often is not raw data, but instead summarized by boundary role incumbents, it is therefore difficult to verify the information that filters into the organization (Aldrich & Herker, 1976).

3.3. Boundary-spanning Roles

Williams (2010, 2011) emphasises the complex role and competencies of those who are boundary spanners. Williams (2002; 2011) further identifies a number of key features of the boundary spanning role, including *reticulist*, *entrepreneur*, *interpreter/communicator* and *co-ordinator/organizer*, with each of these having a number of associated key competencies.

3.3.1. The Reticulist

Reticulism is the most prominent element of the boundary-spanning role. A reticulist is someone who possesses skills in creating, servicing and manipulating communication networks and is

skilled at identifying decision nexuses in an organization. This role is of foremost importance in understanding and managing relationships and interdependencies (Addi-Raccha, 2015; Williams, 2011; 2013). The reticulist aspect of a boundary spanner's role "responds directly to the challenges inherent in managing within a network mode of organizing, requiring the mobilization of a range of political, managerial, personal, strategic and technical competencies" (Williams, 2010, p. 15).

The reticulist manages policy problems within a prescribed political and organizational framework and penetrates the complex and shifting patterns of relationships between decision problems and the equally complex structure of social, political and organizational relationships among decision-makers (Addi-Raccha, 2015). As reticulists, boundary spanners need to understand the organizational environment in which they are situated, to know what actors are involved in, and communicate and negotiate with them (Williams, 2010). Attributes and skills needed to be an effective reticulist are possessing a critical appreciation of the environment and problems/opportunities presented, understanding different organizational contexts, knowing the role and playing it and having political skills to manage relationships between differential sources of power. This requires skills and cognizance of communication, prescience, networking, strategic and tactical skills, understanding complexity and the linkages between interests, professions, organizations and other factors as well as skills in negotiating, conflict resolution and risk-taking (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002; Williams, 2013).

3.3.2. The Entrepreneur

The entrepreneurial element of the boundary spanner reflects the view that traditional approaches and conventional practices are not applicable to current policy problems and focus instead on the importance of developing new and effective solutions to complex problems. As an entrepreneur, the boundary spanner with new ideas, innovation, creativity, experimentation and lateral thinking is expected to make things happen (Williams, 2010; 2011; 2013). In the entrepreneurial mode, the boundary spanner needs to be proactive, ready to take advantage of windows of opportunity, some predictable and others unpredictable (Kingdon, 1984). The boundary spanner as an entrepreneur is ready for windows to open and has prepared strategies to take advantage of political, financial and other windows of opportunity and, moreover, is set to initiate and mediate sustainable solutions between different parties and coalitions (Williams, 2010; 2011). This aspect of the boundary-spanning role requires both risk-taking and resourcefulness (Williams, 2011; 2013). As entrepreneurs, "boundary spanners both advocate their proposals as part of a softening up process, and act as brokers to negotiate successful couplings between the necessary stakeholders; they are associated with creativity because of the free form of the process; they quite often bend problems to solutions (and therefore goals which are too tightly defined can be restrictive)" (Williams, 2010, p. 18). The attributes and skills needed to be an effective entrepreneur are creativity, social perceptiveness and whole-system thinking. The competent entrepreneur must then be insightful and able to act in a variety of social and political settings, able to argue persuasively, be a strategic team builder and be prepared to lead by example (Williams, 2011; 2013).

3.3.3 The Interpreter and Communicator

The third element of the boundary-spanning role is interpreter and communicator (Williams, 2010; 2011; 2013). A core activity for boundary spanners is managing relationships (Williams, 2011). This development of inter-personal relationships is part of "a process of exposure, exploration, discovery and understanding of people and the organizations they represent – a search for knowledge about roles, responsibilities, problems, accountabilities, cultures, professional norms and standards, aspirations and underlying values" (Williams, 2010, p. 19). This demands competencies to initiate and sustain effective interpersonal relationships, built upon an infrastructure of trust, communication, listening, empathy, negotiation, diplomacy and conflict resolution (Williams, 2011; 2013). With these skills, boundary spanners effectively collaborate with their environment, bringing together for collective action a range of external factors from different backgrounds, interests and world views (Addi-Raccha, 2015; Williams, 2011; 2013). This collaborative process needs co-ordination, planning and servicing, which are time-consuming but important parts of the job (Williams, 2013). When boundary spanners understand and manage the difference in organizational culture and language they are able to navigate effectively across boundaries (Bradshaw, 1999).

3.3.4 The Organizer

The last element of the boundary-spanning role, the organizer, relates to the management of the process of collaboration (Williams, 2010). The organizing role involves the planning, co-ordination, servicing and administration of partnerships, which often is time-consuming (Williams, 2010; 2011). The logistic inherent in this organization is complicated by the range of actors involved, which

causes a need for effective, equal and transparent communication, information sharing and decision-making processes (Williams, 2010; 2011). Being at the hub of these activities highlights the centrality of the boundary spanner's position (Williams, 2011).

Although these four aspects of the boundary spanner's role are separately defined, there is a complex interplay between them. The elements and their associated set of competencies may be combined and used in various combinations to handle particular issues and problems to the best effect (Williams, 2010). All boundary spanners have to deal with different forms of complexity and consequently need "an in-depth knowledge of the individuals and agencies that constitute a collaborative domain – their roles, responsibilities, cultures, histories and purposes – and the jigsaw of connections that tie, or potentially tie, them together to achieve some form of collective purpose and synergy" (Williams, 2013, p. 25).

3.4. Boundary spanning - A summary

Boundary spanning can be defined by the organizational structure of the education/school system with boundaries that are permeable (Richardson, 2002). Boundary-spanning activities are undertaken by actors at all levels, chief executives and managers as well as frontline staff engaged in service delivery (Williams, 2013). Furthermore, boundary spanning is extremely complex, "particularly when multiple and overlapping boundaries created by different agencies, sectors and professions are involved and when these often shift in time and space" (Williams, 2011, p. 27). Williams (2011) defines boundary-spanning activities as those that "revolve around people and organizations working together to manage and tackle common issues, to promote better co-ordination and integration of public services, to reduce duplication, to make the best use of scarce

resources and to meet gaps in service provision and to satisfy unmet needs" (Williams, 2011, p. 27). In the management literature, we find several examples of boundary-spanning activities in which managers are able to engage in promoting organizational performance and knowledge transfer (Benoliel & Schechter, 2017).

Through boundary-spanning activities, effective leaders may connect and sustain connections between the different communities of practice within their organization, engaging in internal activities aimed at coordinating the efforts of school members and enhancing continuous learning (Coldren and Spillane, 2007). Simultaneously, research has indicated that principals facilitate school outcomes when they engage in external activities aimed at managing the school environment to acquire resources (Benoliel, 2017). Principals may, on the one hand, maintain a tight boundary around the school, "creating an environment that strengthens the feeling of school staff belonging, protecting the school core from information overload, and enhancing exploitation of knowledge". On the other hand, through keeping a loose boundary around the school, "principals may contribute to adjustment and innovation, promoting the exploration process by an increased awareness of new developments in the school environment" (Benoliel & Schechter, 2017, p. 887). Boundary activities, in combination with principals´ learning mechanisms, enable principals to balance these competing demands, serving as agents to develop the school's capacity to innovate and reform (Benoliel & Schechter, 2017; Thomson, 2010).

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Swedish School Boards' Expectations of Superintendents

Findings from a Nationwide Study

Aiming at an understanding and explanation of how superintendents as boundary spanners may facilitate improvement of teaching and learning, this study takes its departure from a nationwide study of Swedish school board chairs' expectations of superintendents conducted by Rapp et al. (2020).[1] A survey was distributed to chairs of local school boards in all Swedish 290 municipalities, with a response rate of 61 percent. The aim of the survey was to find out to what extent superintendents were expected to take responsibility for student results and what assignments the superintendents were expected to prioritise in their work.

According to the chairs, they are the ones who have the greatest influence on the school boards decisions. The superintendent is the one who has the second largest influence over the political decisions, according to the board chairs. Even if the chair is responsible for setting the school-board's agenda, it is the superintendent who prepares it and thus has an immediate influence on the school boards political agenda and decisions. The chairs were further invited to rank (scale 1-5) the most common agenda items for the boards'

[1] In Sweden, it is statutory that each municipality must have a politically elected board responsible for the local school activities. The members of this board are appointed every four years after the general elections and accordingly the chairs represent different political parties. However, party affiliation has not been of interest to the study and has therefore not been analyzed.

meetings. According to the responses, the most common agenda item is information from the administration (3.92), on second place items about finances (3.77) and on third place items about quality (3.38). Lowest ranked were items about student results (2.91), “decisions about evaluations” (2.80) and “school organization” (2.80).

The study’s findings showed that the chairs have high confidence in their superintendents. Almost all of the chairs stated that they obtained their main information and knowledge about the municipality´s school activities from the superintendent. According to the chairs, the board prefers information about student learning outcomes at the school level, to a lesser extent at the classroom level and to an even smaller extent at the individual level. The chairs further stated that the responsibility for student learning outcomes, first and foremost, lies with the principals. The second greatest responsibility lies with the teachers and then the school board, along with the superintendent. The chairs’ responses to the question about which group has greatest influence over student learning outcomes shows a slightly different picture. The teachers were now ranked as number one, followed by the principals, then parents in third place and the superintendent in fourth place.

In an open-ended question the chairs were asked to specify the superintendents´ three most important work assignments. The result showed that the school boards’ greatest expectation of the superintendents was to perform their leadership duties. The superintendent´s second most important duty was to maintain the budget and other financial tasks. Being responsible for student results was ranked as the third most important assignment.

To answer how the responsibility of performing the pedagogical leadership requirement compared to other

responsibilities, the respondents were asked to rank alternatives to the question of what could lead to a superintendent being criticized. The five alternatives given were 1) exceed allocated budget, 2) unclear leadership, 3) not loyal towards the board, 4) poor student results and 5) other. The chairs also responded, with the same five alternatives, to the question about what factors could lead to a dismissal of the superintendent. The result showed that the major reasons for superintendents to be criticized was if leadership is unclear, if the budget was not maintained and if there was disloyalty. Least risky for being criticized was weak student results**.** When the school board chairs were asked about what actions could lead to dismissal, the rankings are slightly different. Disloyalty is now ranked as number one, followed by unclear leadership and not maintaining the budget. Weak student results was the least risky aspect, according to the chairs. To conclude, unclear leadership and not maintaining the budget were the most risky factors for the superintendent to incur criticism, while poor student results was the least risky factor. The factors most likely to lead to dismissal were disloyalty, unclear leadership and not maintaining the budget. Weak student results is least risky even here. This indicates that the chairs do not expect the superintendent's primary focus to be student learning outcomes.

4.1. Superintendents as Boundary Spanners

Educational leaders, as superintendents, have a pivotal role in balancing the tensions between responding to top-down reforms and at the same time preserving some autonomy in their local school leadership role towards local improvement (Benoliel & Schechter, 2017). "While responding to social and political pressures, principals should buffer the staff from counterproductive policies, build school

improvement initiatives that address external reforms, and meet the needs of the school's students and community" (p. 887). Educational leaders also have to facilitate ongoing learning activities within the school environment despite distracting social, political, and economic forces (Kochan, Bredeson & Riehl, 2002). Through their gatekeeping role, educational leaders may translate external knowledge into opportunities for improving the ongoing learning and other activities in the organization (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Coldren and Spillane (2007) described the facilitation of learning across the boundaries of an organization as boundary spanning. Managing the learning boundary may, for instance, "be balanced with arrangements for analyzing information, such that the information could provide guidance for productive action in schools" (Benoliel & Schechter, 2017, p. 888).

Even if the role of managers often is constructed in terms of directing people, a good part of their activities has more to do with boundary-spanning. In that role they are "able to make new connections across communities of practice, enable coordination, and – if they are good brokers – open new possibilities for meaning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 109). Effective educational leaders use their boundary-spanning role to connect and sustain connections between the different communities of practice within their organization (Coldren and Spillane 2007)" (Millward & Timperley, 2009, s. 142-143). In the case of boundary spanners, educational leaders as individuals rather than being simply routine followers, constitute the mechanism that links leader and teacher practice (Coldren & Spillane, 2007). Boundary spanners and boundary practices are, as defined by Coldren and Spillane (2007), significant instructional leadership tools through their functions as "mechanisms that enable leaders to make connections to teaching practice" (p. 372).

In the local school, the principal usually occupies a boundary-spanning role (Goldring, 1990). Coldren and Spillane (2007) have given examples of how principals as boundary spanners establish and maintain connections between principals´ leadership practice and teaching practice and through instructional leadership influence how they shape teachers´ teaching practice. Principals' leadership practices, that is their boundary activities, take place in fields of practice. Through these boundary activities, principals are constantly engaged in shaping these fields of practice as well as the boundaries that separate these fields. Superintendents´ leadership practices may, in the same way as the principals´ leadership practices, allow superintendents to manage their relations with diverse external factors, work with them toward school improvement and bring coherence to their environment (Goldring and Schuermann, 2009). It is through this process that superintendents, as well as principals, may influence their environment as they have opportunities "to address community-wide problems that are central to schools and the current imperatives of student achievement" (Goldring and Schuermann, 2009, p. 16). By engaging in boundary spanning, a superintendent can serve as an interface between the school, principals and school staff on the one hand, and the school organization´s external environment on the other hand. Accordingly, the superintendent may "not only facilitate the exploitation of knowledge embedded in the school system, but also the exploration of external knowledge across multiple fields of interaction" (Benoliel & Schechter, 2017, p. 882).

Through boundary-spanning activities, using their discretion, principals seek for assistance from the local educational authority (LEA), as well as from their superintendent, in order to sustain their own work (Addi-Raccah, 2015). Principals gain support from their

superintendents and this allows them to interface more effectively with the LEA in order to protect the schools from policy incoherence (Addi-Raccah, 2015). Building personal and close relations with the superintendent makes it possible for principals to buffer unwanted LEAs' intervention (Goldring, 1990) "while still affording the receipt of assistance that they require for school effective functioning" (Addi-Raccah, 2015, p. xx). However, when negotiating and seizing opportunities to obtain assistance from the LEA principals do not take risks, since the principals may resist LEA intervention as long as they have the superintendent's backing (Southworth, 2008). Even if principals do not agree with the LEA and even if they object to its intervention, they pay great attention to their relations with the LEA (Addi-Raccha, 2015; Seashore Louis & Robinson, 2012). It is important to maintain proper relations, avoiding conflict because it is the LEA that provides resources. Principals thus play a double role towards the LEA and superintendents. On one hand, they buffer LEA intervention when the LEA's programs do not fit their school needs as judged by their professional knowledge and experience and, on the other hand, they collaborate with the LEA when they need additional resources for running the school (Addi-Raccah, 2015). For these purposes they count on the superintendent, mediating between the school and LEA.

Principals' relations with superintendents are not only characterized by discretion, but also by flexibility (Addi-Raccah, 2015). If principals build close and personal relations with the superintendent, they may count on assistance from them with discretion according to their schools' needs, which in turn strengthens the principals´ dependency on the superintendent (Addi-Raccah, 2015). Through this relationship, superintendents may support principals in their relations with the LEA and contribute to

the possibilities of the principals bringing about a balance among the various demands imposed on the local school. "Being at the junction at which educational policy [is] evolving, principals may act to lead to a consensus and collaboration among all parties, while gaining legitimization from the superintendent" (Addi-Raccah, 2015, p. 301).

With their position as middle-managers, superintendents can be looked upon as boundary spanners, as well. Uniquely positioned in the local school´s chain of governance, superintendents may "strengthen their basis for professional influences by utilizing boundary-spanning opportunities due to their legitimate access to a range of social and political networks" (Paulsen, 2014, p. 408). As boundary spanners and through boundary activities, superintendents have opportunities to influence and shape not only the principals´ leadership practices but also the political school boards' practices.

The outcomes from the study conducted by Rapp et al. (2020) indicates superintendents´ boundary-spanning roles as *reticulists, interpreters/communicators, entrepreneurs* and *organizers* (Williams, 2002). In their positions, superintendents are positioned in a "structured social space" with its own properties and power relations, overlapping and interrelating with economic, power, political, and other factors. As boundary spanners, superintendents have several potential sources of power to draw upon (Awender, 1985). For the superintendent, first and foremost, professional expertise is a powerful tool. As *reticulist*, the superintendent has considerable power through information advantage and opportunities to influence the political agenda. The chairs of the Swedish school boards have high confidence in their superintendents and obtain their main knowledge about municipal school activity from them (Rapp et al., 2020). Johansson and Nihlfors (2014) also

have concluded that local school boards get their main information from the superintendent. This is in accordance with Awenders (1985) who argues that the superintendent is in the central communications cog in the organization, given that the superintendent is the one who generally processes information both for board members and for the personnel in the organization. Through their access to and control over the distribution of information, superintendents occupy a unique position in their organizations (Bradshaw, 1999). Because of their access to information and control over its dissemination, superintendents gain power and can be influential. Richardson (2002) emphasizes how superintendents through information transfer can be regarded as the most important information channel and filtering agent, since the boundary-spanning role of the superintendent includes controlling the flow of information in and out of the open and permeable boundary between the school system, the board of education, and the community.

Even if the chairs consider themselves to have the greatest influence on the school boards decisions, they still consider the superintendent to be the one who have second biggest influence (Rapp et al., 2020). The great trust and high expectations of the superintendent, at the hub, emphasise the role of the superintendent as *interpreter/communicator*, as well as *organizer*. Even if the chair is responsible for setting the school board's agenda, it is the superintendent who usually is the one who prepares the agenda for the board meeting and thus has an immediate influence on the political agenda (Rapp et al., 2020). Superintendents are then the ones who disseminate the school boards decisions to those individuals affected throughout the organization. Superintendents also carry and interpret needs and desires from principals and teachers to the board for consideration, but also provides principals and teachers with

accurate indications of the policies and instructions that the board wishes to convey to the organization.

Summary and Concluding Remarks

The boundary-spanning roles of reticulist, interpreter/communicator and organizer seem to be the three with the highest priorities, according to the findings from the nationwide study conducted by Rapp et al. (2020). These roles are also the most time-consuming (Williams, 2010; 2011; 2013). Superintendents are expected to spend a great deal of time on learning to know their role and playing it, managing relationships, communicating, networking, negotiating, coordinating, planning, serving and administrating. Cuban (1988) has stated that through history educational leaders have been depicted as focusing on their managerial duties. The movement of decentralization and New Public Management from the 1990s has further given greater focus on management issues, which can be seen as a distraction that takes attention away from leading teaching and learning (Jarl et al. 2012; Millward & Timperley, 2009). This is obvious even in the findings of the study conducted by Rapp et al (2020) in which the superintendents´ management duties were prioritized. Expectations of the superintendents by the school boards rested primarily on managerial assignments, and expectations about influencing students´ learning outcomes were lower ranked, along with a low risk of being criticized or dismissed because of weak student results (Rapp et al., 2020). These findings indicate a space of agency, according to superintendents, as instructional leaders. With their important role due to the success of their organizations as a catalyst for innovation and structural change (Aldrich and Herker, 1977), this space of agency may be used for entrepreneurial actions.

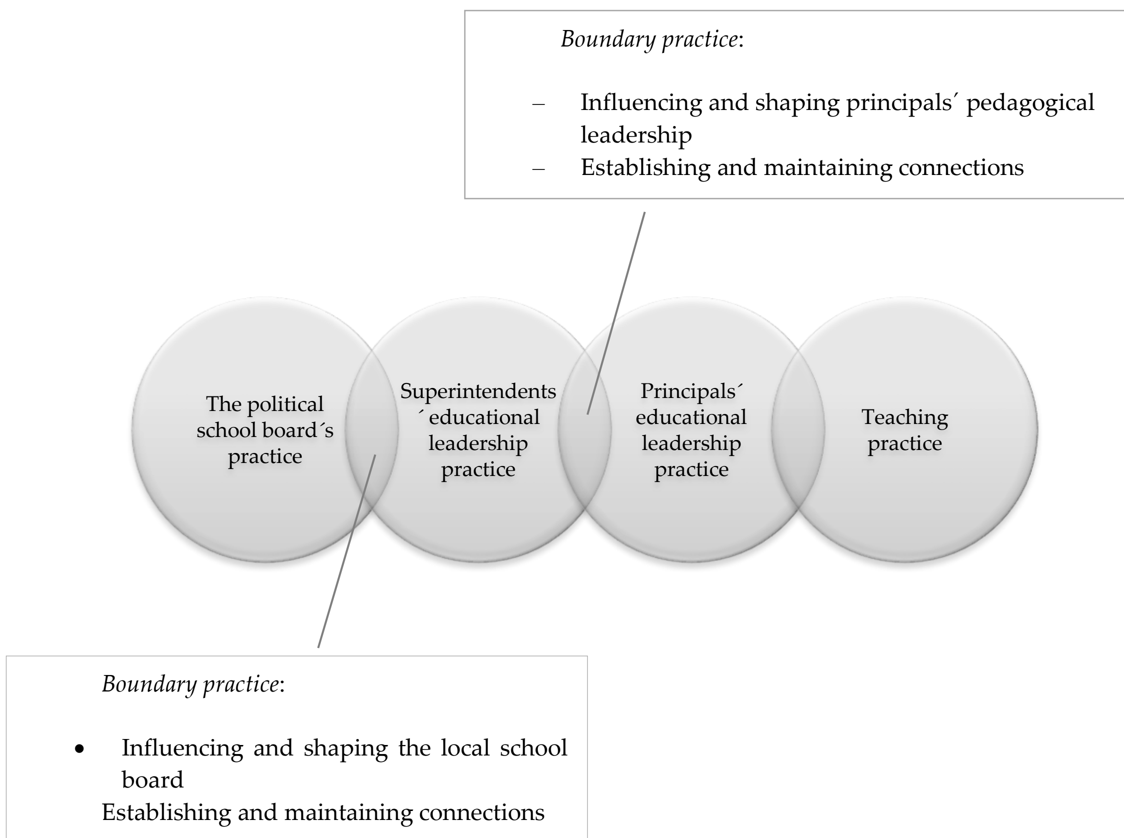
According to Moos et al. (2016), superintendents feel that they are very autonomous in their actions. The school boards low expectations about superintendents influencing teaching and learning and the low risk of being criticized or dismissed because of poor student results (Rapp et al., 2020) leads to entrepreneurial opportunities. As an *entrepreneur,* the superintendent as boundary spanner can make things happen (Williams, 2002). The opportunity to make choices about activities as well as their formal position and status enables them to control the allocation of resources and policy decision-making within their own organizations (Williams, 2013). As entrepreneurial boundary spanners, superintendents may focus on the importance of developing new and effective solutions to complex and challenging problems with a view towards innovation, creativity and experimentation. They must be strategic team-builders and have confidence in leading by example. The entrepreneurial role further demands a proactive approach as well as whole-system thinking. As entrepreneur the superintendent need already-prepared strategies to take advantage of political, financial and other resources when windows of opportunities open. This role not only requires readiness but also risk-taking, which in turn requires courage and an organizational culture of trust.

As boundary spanners, superintendents exert social influence downward as well as upward, influencing principals and teachers, as well as administrators and politicians at the district level (Paulsen, 2014). Through agency and discretion, superintendents have a capacity as educational leaders to stretch across boundary practices, influencing the political school board practice and principals´ leadership practice and endeavouring to improve teaching and learning. Through effective utilization of boundary-spanning opportunities, several possible outcomes may be obtained. For

example, as boundary spanners superintendents may contribute to an organization´s learning capacity (Paulsen, 2014). Through boundary-spanning activities, superintendents may facilitate strengthening connections between people that work in an organization's different functional units or linking internal milieus closer to external environments (Paulsen, 2014), as well as school improvement. Superintendents perceive that the school board hold high expectations of them, not only collaborating with the school board but also with the local community (Nihlfors & Johansson, 2014).

Figure 2.

Superintendents as Boundary Spanners.



It appears that there are significant possibilities to expand and strengthen the superintendents´ boundary practices, with routines and professional leadership tools, and thus contribute to sustaining connections between educational leadership practices on different levels (Coldren & Spillane, 2007). With tightly-coupling and boundary-spanning practices, instructional leadership can create such a learning environment, required for the kind of organizational changes that raise student achievement (Millward & Timperley, 2010). Superintendents can be recognised as having autonomy and discretion to realise the local schools´ concerns and needs, as well as interests and demands from district level. As instructional leaders and by facilitating ability of people and organizations to work together to manage and tackle common and complex issues, superintendents may undertake boundary-spanning activities and work effectively in raising student learning outcomes (Coldren & Spillane, 2007; Williams, 2011). Aspirations for strong instructional leadership though often fall short of the reality (Cooley and Shen, 2003). One explanation is that increased instructional leadership requires leaders to spend more time on the educational and less on the management duties, or at least to integrate instructional concerns into all aspects of their managerial decision-making (Richardson, 2002).

Making a shift to a stronger instructional-leadership role poses considerable professional and organizational challenges. The professional challenges include developing the capabilities required to engage in the practices described as instructional leadership while "the organizational challenges include aligning the organizational and systemic conditions that shape educational leaders' work to the

goal of stronger instructional leadership" (Seashore Louis & Robinson, p. 635). For superintendents to become more involved as instructional leaders, they need to see themselves as professional educational leaders in addition to their usual managerial responsibilities (Huber, 2011). Furthermore, they need to make use of their boundary spanning entrepreneurial role in their endeavours to improve teaching and learning. By courage and determination superintendents need to take advantage of the windows of opportunities which open up due to their discretionary power as instructional leaders. But the possibilities of boundary-spanning instructional actions are not immediately obvious and superintendents must initiate and develop them further (Coldren & Spillane, 2007). Spanning the boundaries between personnel and management is not always comfortable. The boundary spanner "therefore requires an ability to manage carefully the coexistence of membership, yielding enough distance to bring a different perspective, but also enough legitimacy to be listened to" (Wenger, 1998, p. 109).

The aim of this study is to develop a theoretical understanding on how superintendents as boundary spanners may facilitate improvement of teaching and learning. In their roles as boundary spanners and through boundary-spanning activities, superintendents are able to exert an indirect instructional leadership and thereby tighten the couplings between different hierarchical levels in the school system. Superintendents, who have a low risk of being criticized or dismissed as a result of poor student results, are expected to prioritize their boundary-spanning roles as reticulists, interpreter/communicators and organizers. This indicates a space of agency for the superintendents to capitalise on their entrepreneurial boundary-spanning role to work more effectively as instructional

leaders. While Williams (2011) stresses entrepreneurship and innovation as important capacities for boundary spanners, Addi-Raccha (2015) concludes that these aspects are marginal for educational leaders (Addi-Raccah, 2015).

Finally, the result of this study indicates how superintendents through their role as boundary spanners and through boundary-spanning activities can effectively facilitate improvement of teaching and learning. There is, however, a need for further, in-depth research on the way superintendents on macro-level can work effectively as instructional leaders and how through a whole-system approach they may tighten the couplings in the school´s chain of governance. How can superintendents in their entrepreneurial boundary-spanning roles work effectively as instructional leaders? What activities do successful entrepreneurial superintendents undertake? What are the activities going on in the boundary practices wherein superintendents are involved? Which are the boundary objects?

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Principal Turnover: When is it a Problem and for Whom? Mapping Out Variations Within the Swedish Case

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Abstract

Principal turnover has become topic of discussion, attracting attention not only in media, but also among scholars. Research indicate that high turnover rate is problematic for several reasons. First, it jeopardises stability of school management, which is crucial for schools, not only to function well but also to develop as organisations. Second, since studies indicate that principals have an important, yet indirect, effect on student learning, it is reasonable to expect high turnover to impact negatively on both student and school performance.

The aim of the study was to map out and describe national variations in principal turnover in Sweden and thus provide a basis for practice-oriented research. To determine the level of turnover and the extent to which particular municipalities or types of municipalities are facing substantially higher turnover than others, statistical data from Statistics Sweden (SCB) were used.

Results show that the average principal has worked in the same municipality for approximately six years and changed schools less than once. Yet, results differ between different types of municipalities, i.e. metropolitan, urban, rural and sparsely populated areas. The results raise fundamental, yet often, overseen questions, namely: When and for whom is principal turnover a problem?

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Introduction

Since the ability of an educational system to attract and retain qualified principals is crucial to a school's functioning over time, principal turnover (e.g. principal mobility within and exit from the school system) has become an issue of concern among policymakers worldwide. This is especially true in countries where the level of turnover is considered high, as it is in Sweden (NAE, 2015; 2019).

The concern about principal turnover stems from general knowledge about the importance of school leadership (Wahlstrom et al., 2010; Seashore Louis, 2015), as well as studies focusing particularly on consequences of principal turnover (e.g. Béteille et al., 2012; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Miller, 2013; Ronfeldt et al., 2013)[1]. These studies indicate that a high turnover level is problematic for several reasons. First, it denies schools the stability they need, not only to function well, but also to develop as organisations. According to previous research on organisational change and school development, implementation and improvement processes take approximately 5–7 years (Sannerstedt, 1997; Fullan, 2001). Second, since principals are shown to have an important, yet indirect, effect on student learning, it is reasonable to expect a high turnover level to have negative impact on student and school performance. Findings from studies focusing on consequences of principal turnover indicate that principal turnover may have negative impact on student

[1] See Snodgrass Rangler (2018) for review.

achievement (e.g. Béteille et al., 2012; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Miller, 2013). Other studies suggest that high principal turnover is related to higher teacher turnover, which in turn may have negative impact on student achievement (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Third, high levels of principal turnover generate a constant need to search for more individuals to assume leadership positions (Gates et al., 2005). This makes principal turnover time consuming, and thus costly.

Awareness of these and perhaps even other problems related to principal turnover has warranted researchers within the field of educational administration and leadership to conduct studies aiming at better understanding of this area of concern. Thus, research on principal turnover "has begun to shed light on what helps explain patterns of turnover and the extent to which turnover is bad for schools and student achievement" (Snodgrass Rangel, 2018, p. 119). However, when it comes to dealing with issues related to principal turnover, current research is insufficient due to the relational and context dependent nature of practice. Therefore, in order to understand principal turnover, it is necessary to investigate the sites and the landscapes in which it occurs. This calls for practice-oriented case studies, and research designs that allow for exploration of important dimensions and relations within the local educational complex. The need for such research is substantial since hitherto principal turnover has, to a large extent, been treated as a general problem and solutions offered have not been very sensitive to variations within the local context. However, this type of research presupposes knowledge about the occurrence and distribution of principal turnover. Without such knowledge, it is difficult to select relevant cases.

The overall purpose of the research project is to gain knowledge about principal turnover in Sweden. In this particular study, we seek to describe variations in the level of principal turnover, and thus provide a basis for practice-oriented research as a means to solve problems related to principal turnover.

The article is structured as follows: First, there is a brief summary of previous research on principal turnover, followed by a short presentation of the Swedish case (contextual background and previous measures on the level of principal turnover in Sweden). Then, the research inquiry (data and methods) is described before moving on to the sections in which the results are presented, and discussed in terms of implications and limitations. The article ends with a conclusion section and some future prospects.

Previous Research on Principal Turnover

In recent years, principal turnover has received an increasing amount of attention among scholars within the field of educational administration and leadership. This has resulted in a growing body of knowledge on the matter. A large number of studies have focused on its causes (e.g. Béteille et al., 2012; Loeb et al., 2010; Miller, 2013; Ronfeldt et al., 2013), and a wide range of determinants have emerged from such research. Some main findings based on research conducted within the US context are summarised, synthesised and discussed in a recent review of literature on principal turnover (Snodgrass Rangel, 2018) in which the determinants are divided into four major groups: 1) the principal's characteristics, 2) the school and students' characteristics, 3) the nature of the position and 4) policy. The first group includes factors such as principals' sex, race, age, experience, education and satisfaction (Snodgrass Rangel, 2018, p. 99–

103). The second includes school performance, school conditions (e.g. student discipline problems, teacher abuse and disrespect), school level and size, school urbanity and student characteristics (e.g. socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity and need for special education) (p. 104–109). The third includes degree of autonomy, relationships, and the changing nature of the position (p.103–104). The fourth includes principal's salary, accountability policy, district expenditures, challenges hiring and firing teachers, teachers' or teacher characteristics (e.g. teacher certification, qualification and experience), school type (e.g. public or charter school); district retirement incentives, and professional development initiatives (p. 109–113). Similar results are presented in another report, based on a review of 35 major studies on principal turnover (Levin & Bradley, 2019). In this report, the determinants are divided into five major groups: 1) Inadequate preparation and professional development, 2) Poor working conditions, 3) Insufficient salaries, 4) Lack of decision-making authority and 5) High-stakes accountability policies (Levin & Bradley, 2019). From the research presented and reviewed in their report, Levin and Bradley (2019) conclude that schools with "higher percentages of students from low-income families, students of color, and low-performing students" (p. 4) are more vulnerable to principal turnover than others.

In other parts of the world, principal turnover is less investigated; and in Sweden as in other Nordic countries, research on the subject is scarce. In 2007–2008, Ekholm et al. (2009) investigated principal turnover in fifteen municipalities in a province located in the west-central part of Sweden. During that year, 18 per cent of the principals in the current province left their positions. When these principals were asked about their reasons for leaving, the most frequent answers were retirement and school reorganisations. The

principals whose answers did not fall into any of these two main categories announced either that they had chosen to retire earlier or that they had applied for and got other jobs (as principals or as teachers), as a response to various working or life conditions, e.g. a desire for new challenges, heavy work load, changes within family situation (Ekholm et al., 2009). Since Ekholm et al. (2009) reported their study, questions related to principal turnover have mainly attracted the attention of Swedish authorities, e.g. the Swedish Work Environment Authority[2], the Swedish Schools Inspectorate[3] and the Swedish National Agency for Education (NAE)[4].

However, issues related to the causes and consequences of principal turnover have also been tapped upon by researchers interested in principals' working environment and health issues (e.g. Corin & Björk, 2016; Corin & Cregård, 2019; Leo et al., 2019). In an ongoing research project on organisational conditions, stress-related psychological illness, mobility and potential for improvement, Leo et al. (2019) seek answers to questions related to principals' experiences and management of internal and external demands and expectations, and access to support. Preliminary results from this project suggest that Swedish principals are often very lonely in their positions that demands and expectations from national level often clash with demands and expectations from local level, and that administrative support is insufficient (Leo et al., 2019). Moreover, principals' working conditions seem to be changing. According to tentative results from a qualitative study based on group interviews that were carried out as part of the previously mentioned research project, there

[2] See Swedish Work Environment Authority (2011).
[3] See Swedish Schools Inspectorate (2019).
[4] See NAE (2016).

is an increasing number of parents who claim their children's rights to special and individualised education; and an increasing number of complaints reported to the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (and as a result thereof, an increasing amount of time is spent on documenting student cases in order to meet the inspectorate's demands). Additionally, there is an increasing number of threats from parents, who claim they will report the school (to the inspectorate or media) or remove their child from the school if the school fails to meet their demands. All together, these changes are creating an increasingly stressful working situation for the principals, whilst there is a perceived lack of support and trust from the levels above, creating a situation that may cause principal turnover (Leo et al., 2019). These results reflect those found in broader studies on managers in the public sectors (e.g. Corin & Björk, 2016; Corin & Cregård, 2019). According to Corin and Björk (2016), who have studied managers' psychosocial working condition among human service managers, there is an imbalance between high level of job requirements and lack of resources to meet these demands: "Work overload, conflicting and unclear goals and tasks, emotional demands, restricted control, and lack of supervisory and organizational support generally characterized the managerial assignment" (p. 3).

Fundamental but Forgotten Perspectives on Principal Turnover

Despite the increasing number of studies, Snodgrass Rangler (2018) claims that "our understanding of principal turnover remains relatively weak" (p. 116). Based on her review, she points to methodological problems such as lack of strong research designs (that do not permit the attribution of causality) and inconsistencies between and within studies, as well disregard for variation. With

reference to the work of Boyce and Bowers (2016), Snodgrass Rangler concludes that "principals, whether they leave or stay, are not monolithic or interchangeable; rather, principals vary in terms of the conditions under which they leave and in terms of how effective they are at improving student achievement" (Snodgrass Rangler, 2018, p. 113).

This conclusion is reflected in a report (Pwc, n.d.) based on a number of revisions carried out in Swedish schools during 2017–2018. According to those revisions, municipality's size, organisation and local regulatory documents have a decisive impact on the conditions for support, mandate, powers and distribution of resources and that local school's access to and quality of the support is, to a large extent, dependent on factors such as the size of the school or the school's geographical location in the municipality.

Yet, the solutions (to the presumed problem of principal turnover) often tend to be general rather than specific, in Sweden as elsewhere; e.g. return to state controlled schools' (Nilzon, 2019) extended and improved initial education and in-service training for teachers and principals (SOU, 2018) and shared leadership (Wahlstrom et al., 2010). This tendency to forget, or neglect the fact that "not all are the same", is problematic. No matter how good general solutions like those just referred to might be, they run the risk of obscuring the local practice perspective in ways that may hamper the search for appropriate solutions. From this perspective, acknowledgement of variation comes across as a fundamental but often forgotten, or overseen, perspective within the field of educational administration and leadership. Against this backdrop, measuring not just the level, but also variations in levels of principal

turnover, becomes an important step in the knowledge building process.

The Swedish Case

Contextual Background

Swedish principals work within a school system that is centralised and decentralised, tax-financed and regulated through the Education Act (2010). "The parliament has legislative power, and the government implements the decisions of the parliament through national agencies and school owners, superintendents, principals, and teachers in the governing chain described in the steering documents" (Ärlestig et al., 2016, p. 104). The school owners, henceforth referred to as organisers (whether represented by a municipality or a private actor), are responsible for allocation of resources and administration. The organisers are also the employers of school personnel and hence responsible for the staffs' professional development (EACEA, 2018).

As in many other European countries, international trends based on ideas about school decentralisation, quality, accountability, marketisation and new public management (Holm and Lundström, 2011; Lundahl et al., 2010) have influenced and transformed the Swedish educational landscape in which principal practices take form. The majority of the schools are still municipality organised. However, the number of independent schools, or 'free schools', as these are called in Sweden, have rapidly expanded since free school choice was introduced in 1992. From a principal perspective, these international trends have created a changed labour market, with not only new possibilities to affect working conditions and salaries but also new demands and expectations. In recent years, external

evaluation has increased, and so has its influence on local schools as the Swedish School Inspectorate has received greater powers (Novak, 2018; Rönnberg, 2011). Together with high expectations and individual accountability, this has put greater pressure on principals from national political bodies and agencies, as well as the municipality (Ärlestig et al., 2016; Nihlfors & Johansson 2013).

There is no national principal rotation system. Principals are seldom (re)moved from a position, or even moved from one school to another.

It is also worth noticing that mobility is generally high in Sweden compared to other European and OECD countries (TCO, 2016).

Previous Measures on Principal Turnover in Sweden

According to analysis carried out by the Swedish National Agency for Education based on TALIS[5] in 2013, more than one out of four Swedish principals changed schools between the year 2013–2014 and 2014–2015 (NAE, 2015; 2016). In addition, half of the principals stayed in their current school for less than three years, and every fifth principal was new within the profession (NAE, 2015). Analysis indicated differences between municipality-run 'public schools', and privately-run (independent) 'free schools'. In the former, 52 per cent of the principals had at least five years within the profession. In the latter, the corresponding number was 41 (NAE, 2016). In the reporting, differences are explained with reference to school reorganisations, which seem to be more common in municipality-run 'public schools'.

[5] Teaching and Learning International Survey

Moreover, recent measures based on TALIS 2018 suggest that Swedish principals are less experienced than their peers in other countries (OECD, 2019). According to these measures, the average Swedish principal has nine years of work experience in the role, of which seven are at the current school, whereas the OECD average is ten years, of which seven are at the current school. However, variation between countries is extensive. For instance, in countries like Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the average principal has remained in the profession between fourteen and sixteen years, whereof ten to fourteen are within the current school. In contrast, in Korea, the average principal has remained in the profession only three and a half years, whereof less than two are in the current school (OECD, 2019).

Obviously, principals in the countries listed above work in different educational systems, and under very different conditions[6]. The reasonableness of these comparisons, although often made in international assessments, can therefore be discussed. Nevertheless, they indicate that the level of principal turnover is, if not high, then at least higher than in many other countries.

The numbers presented above are often referred to and quoted in the media as evidence of the disturbing situation initially referred to in this paper. However, these measures do not provide a comprehensive picture since they only cover a small part of the population. Reporting based on data received from TALIS 2018 relies on survey responses from 340 out of 4,700 Swedish principals (NAE,

[6] Within the Nordic context, differences are smaller. In Norway, Denmark, Iceland and Finland, the average principal has remained in the profession between eight and twelve years, whereof approximately five to seven are in the current school (OECD, 2019).

2019), whereof 116 (out of 3,600 in total) work in compulsory schools[7] and 174 (out of 1100 in total) work in upper secondary schools. In addition, these measures provide little knowledge about national variations in level of principal turnover. Hence, questions like when and for whom principal turnover is a problem remain unanswered.

The study presented in the subsequent section of this article is part of a larger research project aiming to better understand the reasons behind principal turnover and its impact on local school practices within the Swedish context. It rests on the assumption that not all schools and principals are the same, and it views knowledge about variation as a prerequisite for purposive context sensitive and practice-oriented case studies aiming to provide better understanding of principal turnover, and accordingly more targeted solutions.

Data and Methods

According to the definition used in this article, principal turnover occurs when a principal leaves and "does not return to the same school from one year to another" (Snodgrass Rangler, 2018, p. 96). As the definition is used within the study, attention is directed towards the 'mobility' rather than 'stability' aspect of turnover. That means counting the amount of departures, rather than the proportion of time a principal stays at the same school or the proportion of time a principal remains at one school, relative to the full number of years within the profession.

Statistical data received from Statistics Sweden (SCB) and quantitative descriptive analysis were used to determine the level of

[7] Swedish compulsory schooling is equivalent to ten years of school attendance for all children from the year they turn six.

turnover and the extent to which particular municipalities or types of municipalities are facing substantially higher turnover than others.

The data covers the period 1980–2017 and consist of statistical information about the total population of 18,273 Swedish comprehensive school principals registered in the SCB database during that period. The data provide general information such as gender and age group; and specific information relevant for the study, i.e. number of principals, number of years worked, and number of school and municipal changes (Box 1).

Box 1.

Variable Definitions

Number of persons: Number of specific individuals who have been active in the municipality/county under the current school form. An individual can thus exist in several municipalities/counties.

Number of working years: Number of years individuals are present in the current municipality/county under the current school form.

Number of school changes: Number of times a new individual starts a new school. Entry into the labour market is not considered a change. The value falls on the municipality/county where the new school is located.

Total: All principals who were in the register between 1980 and 2017.

Those who left the profession before 2017: Those who were not included in the register in 2017.

Active 2017: Those who were included in the register in 2017.

The data allow for measuring principal turnover, in terms of occurrence and distribution of movement (from and between schools) across groups.

A classification of Swedish municipalities developed by The Swedish Board of Agriculture (SBA) was used to distinguish between different types of municipalities. According to this classification, Sweden's 290 municipalities are divided into 47 metropolitan areas, 46 urban areas, 164 rural areas and 33 sparsely populated areas (Box 2).

Box 2.

Municipality Classifications according to SBA.

Metropolitan areas: Municipalities in the metropolitan regions of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. One hundred per cent of the population are located in areas with more than 10,000 inhabitants or within 60-kilometre radius, which is assumed to be the limit for frequent commuting, from the three major cities.

Urban areas: Municipalities with a population of at least 30,000 and/or where the largest urban area has at least 25,000 inhabitants. Smaller municipalities bordering these larger municipalities and where commuters, as a proportion of the night population, exceed 50 per cent are also connected to the respective metropolitan areas.

Rural areas: Municipalities that are not included in the two previous classifications (metropolitan areas and urban areas) and which at the same time have a population density of at least five inhabitants per km2.

Sparsely populated areas: Municipalities that are not included in the other three classifications and which have a population of less than five inhabitants per km2 (SBA, n.d.).

Analysis was guided by the following questions:

1. What is the level of principal turnover?
2. How does the level of principal turnover vary between a) different municipalities and b) different types of municipalities?

Results

The analysis was carried out in two steps. First, the level of principal turnover was calculated based on information about the whole study population, e.g. all comprehensive school principals registered between 1980–2017, and about those active in 2017. Second, variations in level of principal turnover were calculated based on municipal statistics.

Levels of Principal Turnover 1980–2017

Two different measures were used to establish the level of turnover on national level: the number of 'years worked in the municipality' and the number of 'school changes per person'. In addition, the number of 'school changes per year worked' was calculated, in order to enhance comparability between groups. As illustrated in Table 1, the average principal had worked approximately seven years in the municipality and made less than one school change (M = 0.93). The average number of school changes per year worked was M = .13. Differences between men and women were slight.

Table 1.

Number of years worked, school changes and school changes per worked year, depending on principals´ sex.

		Years worked in the municipality	School changes per person	School changes per year worked
	N	Mean	Mean	Mean
Men	7807	7.41	0.94	0.13
Women	10466	6.82	0.92	0.14
Total	18273	7.07	0.93	0.13

However, there were considerable variations between different age groups (Table 2). For instance, principals born in the 40s and 50s had worked longer in the municipality and made more school changes than principals born later as well as earlier. Now, since the principals' age, for natural reasons is likely to regulate the amount of years within the profession as well as the amount of school changes, it is difficult to make comparisons based on these two measures (i.e. 'years worked in the municipality' and 'school changes'). Hence, the additional measure, 'school changes per worked year', was used to make comparisons between different age groups.

Table 2.

Number of years worked, school changes per person and year worked, depending on principals´ belonging to certain age groups.

		Years worked in the municipality	School changes per person	School changes per worked year
Year of birth	N	Mean	Mean	Mean
–1929	989	6.82	.24	.04
1930–1939	1703	7.63	.57	.08
1940–1949	4223	8.17	1.01	.12
1950–1959	4986	8.54	1.27	.15
1960–1969	3434	5.96	.97	.16
1970–1979	2580	4.27	.70	.16
1980–	350	2.65	.39	.15
Total	18273	7.07	.93	.13

As illustrated above, the average number of school changes per worked year was greater among the younger principals. The greatest number of changes per worked year (M = .16) was found in the groups of principals born in the 60s and 70s. The smallest number of changes per worked year (M = .04) was found in the group of principals born before 1930, followed by those born in the 30s (M = .08). These measures suggest that there is a tendency among younger principals to change schools more frequently than their older peers. This tendency is confirmed by the pattern displayed in Table 3, where

the group of principals active in 2017 is compared to the group of principals who left before 2017.[8]

Table 3.

Number of years worked, school changes per person and per year worked. Differences between principals who were employed after 1980 and left before 2017, and principals active in 2017.

		Years worked in the municipality	School changes per person	School changes per year worked
	N	Mean	Mean	Mean
Principals who were employed after 1980 and left before 2017	12126	5.68	.75	.13
Principals active in 2017	4637	6.07	.76	.16

Municipal Variations in Principal Turnover

In the second step of the analysis, attention was directed towards Sweden's 290 municipalities and the various types of municipalities previously described, in terms of metropolitan, urban, rural and sparsely populated areas. In contrast to the measures presented in the previous section, those presented in this part of the study focus solely on principals active in 2017. Yet, these data are somewhat limited due to SCB's disclosure control, which in the current set of data applies to 30 of Sweden's 290 municipalities. Consequently, some values presented in this section are based on the sample of 260 municipalities.

[8] The groups were pre-defined by the data available. See Box 1 in the previous section of this article.

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 4 provide an overall image of the current population. Within the sample of 260 municipalities for which there are statistics available, the number of principals varied between six as the least and 293 as the most (M = 22.65). The total number of school changes made by principals within the sample varied between none and 269 (M = 21.30).

Table 4.

Descriptive statistics based on information about principals active in 2017.

	Min.	Max	Mean
Principals[a]	6	293	22.65
School changes[a]	.00	269	21.30
Years worked in the municipality[b]	2.00	16.43	6.07
School changes per person[b]	.00	3.33	.96
School changes per year worked in the municipality[b]	.00	.83	.16

a. The sample includes principals in 260 municipalities. The remaining 30 municipalities are missing due to SCB disclosure control.
b. The sample includes principals in all 290 municipalities.

Additionally, the average number of years worked in the municipality varied between 2.0 as the least and 16.43 as the most (M = 6.07); the number of school changes varied between none and 3.33 per person (M = .96); and the number of school changes per year worked in the municipality varied between none and .83. (M = .16).

When the extremes (i.e. outliers) are selected and analysed (Table 5), it becomes evident that the majority of the municipalities with considerably higher levels of turnover are municipalities sited in rural areas. Almost three-quarters (21/29) of the municipalities above

the upper 10th percentile were municipalities located in these areas. Additionally, many of those with the lowest level of turnover were located either in rural or in sparsely populated areas. In fact, approximately half (15/29) of the municipalities below the lower 10th percentile were located in rural areas, and approximately one-third (10/29) were located in sparsely populated areas.

Table 5.

Number of municipalities above the upper 10th percentile and below the 10th percentile, according to 'average number of school changes per year worked' in the municipality[9]

Type of municipality	Number of municipalities above the upper 10th percentile	Number of municipalities below the lower 10th percentile
Metropolitan areas	3	2
Urban areas	2	2
Rural areas	21	15
Sparsely populated areas	3	10
Total	29	29

Furthermore, principals in rural areas had worked longer (M = 6.39 years) within the municipality and changed schools more often (M = 1.04 times) than principals in sparsely populated, urban and metropolitan areas. It also shows that variations were smaller in sparsely populated areas than in all other types of municipalities, e.g. the standard deviation for school changes per person = .15 for municipalities in sparsely populated areas (Table 6).

[9] See *Appendix 1* for a list of the municipalities.

Table 6.

Variations in principal turnover, based on information about principals active in 2017. Means demonstrating differences between principals in metropolitan, urban, rural and sparsely populated areas.

		Years worked as principal in the municipality		School changes per person		School changes per year worked in the municipality	
	N	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.
Metropolitan areas	47	5.08	1.19	.76	.24	.15	.04
Urban areas	46	5.84	1.52	.95	.41	.16	.05
Rural areas	164	6.39	2.41	1.04	.56	.17	.08
Sparsely populated areas	33	6.17	2.63	.88	.15	.15	.14
Total	290	6.07	.96	.68	.53	.16	.08

In summary, results show that the average principal had worked approximately six or seven years in the municipality, depending on age, sex and when active (i.e. registered) during the period 1980–2017, and made less than one school change. A slight trend towards greater mobility may be discerned in the data, indicating an increasing mobility within the profession.

Yet, there are differences between municipalities and between various types of municipalities. In general, principals in rural areas had worked longer within the municipality and changed schools more often (per person and per worked year) than principals in sparsely populated, urban and metropolitan areas.

Regarding variation, rural and sparsely populated areas stand out as particularly interesting: rural areas because they are over-represented in the group of extremes (i.e. they appear more often on

both sides of the upper and lower 10th percentiles than other types of municipalities), and sparsely populated areas because they display considerably smaller variations in between themselves than all other types of municipalities and therefore come across as more homogenous in this regard.

Implications and Limitations

With regard to the general trend towards a higher turnover indicated in the study, it seems reasonable to step back and consider some of the trends previously referred to in this article (e.g. decentralisation, quality, accountability, marketisation and new public management). For instance, with the expansion of school market and free schools, it has become possible for many principals to choose, and change, between several different employers beside the municipality organiser without leaving the region where they live. With this expanded choice, principals are in a better position to influence their working conditions, including the salaries (which have become immensely differentiated since the transition from a national collective pay system to local individual salary setting in 1996). Nonetheless, at the same time, there is an increased pressure on principals not only to perform well but also to handle many, often incompatible, demands and expectations. Together, these and other trends on national and international level have transformed the landscapes in which principals navigate, and thus created new enabling as well as constraining conditions for principals' professional practices. However, when it comes to understanding variations in principal turnover as they appear in the data reported here, such general knowledge is less useful if it is not somehow linked to more specific and context sensitive knowledge. In order to

understand why principals in rural areas work longer and make more changes (per person and per year worked), and why municipalities in rural areas are among those with the highest and the lowest levels of turnover, specific knowledge about these types of areas must be considered. Just as specific knowledge about sparsely populated areas is needed for understanding why sparsely populated areas are more homogenous in this sense.

This required knowledge is missing today since, as previously pointed out, research on principal turnover is insufficient (and perhaps inappropriate to the national context). Similarly, research on educational leadership in rural and sparsely populated areas is also lacking (Bæck, 2015; Lund, 2020; Surface & Theobald, 2014). However, some statements can be made based on studies carried out within the broader field of research on rural and sparsely populated schools. For instance, it has become evident that local policymakers in rural or sparsely populated desertification areas, sometimes relate differently to national educational objectives (such as students' academic performance and schools' goal achievement) than what is usually the case in other types of areas (Nihlfors & Johansson, 2015)[10]. Moreover, teachers working in schools situated in these areas "face different working conditions than those faced by teachers in urban schools" (Pettersson & Ström, 2019, p. 181). In a summary review of literature on teacher professional collaboration in rural schools, Pettersson and Ström (2019) identify a number of features common to

[10] A specific concept applicable to municipalities in these areas derived from this study: 'good-enough municipalities'. The concept refers to municipalities demonstrating a tendency to settle with results beneath what could be expected according to the preconditions, where academic knowledge is not strongly valued, and where the strive to save a school from closure sometimes overshadows national objectives such as pupils' academic performance and schools' goal achievement.

schools in rural areas: "geographic isolation, a low number of teachers and students, multi-grade classrooms, diverse learning needs among students, lack of support staff, multifaceted working tasks for teachers and scarce professional development opportunities" (p. 181). Also identified were some challenges often faced by rural schools, for instance, "ongoing demographic and social changes, shrinking population, financial constraints and the constant fear of school closures" (p. 181). If, and to what extent, such characteristics are relevant to the matter of principal turnover within these areas is an empirical question, yet to be answered. Some future prospects are described in the next section, but first the limitations of the study will be addressed.

As always, there are limitations to a study. In this case, results, and thus the possibilities to make knowledge claims, are limited to certain group of principals, namely Swedish comprehensive school principals registered in the SCB database during 1980–2017 regardless of organiser (e.g. municipality or independent actor); this excludes other groups of principals (e.g. principals working in preschools, upper secondary schools and adult education) and principals active outside the current time span. The sample was conditioned by data availability (e.g. years worked in the municipality, not as principal), as was the definitions of the groups, and thus the possibilities to make comparisons (e.g. between principals active at various time slots)[11]. Consequently, it was not possible to measure and compare levels of principal turnover in various school forms, nor was it possible to compare levels of principal turnover in municipality-run 'public schools', and privately-run 'free schools', although that might have been relevant

[11] See Box 1 in the Data and methods section.

since previous measures have indicated variations in mobility between principals working within these different types of schools (NAE, 2015).

Moreover, the data did not provide information about variations within municipalities, between schools and/or between individual principals, where the greatest variations are likely to be found.

According to local statistics received from a municipality under investigation (Thelin, 2019), there are schools which have kept their principal for a very long time (27 years as the most) and there are schools which have had many changes (ten in 15 years as the most). Results from this pilot study clearly illustrate the importance of mapping out variations on several levels in the educational system. The study presented in this article must therefore be seen not as the last, but rather a first in a line of several.

Conclusion and Future Studies

At large, the results presented in this article are in line with those previously presented by the Swedish National Agency for Education (2015; 2016) and OECD (2019), although they are not completely comparable due to differences in types of data and measures used.

Moreover, previous measures on principal turnover in Sweden do not provide knowledge about national variations. In that sense, the current study adds to previous knowledge about principal turnover in Sweden. At the same time, the study serves as an illustrative example of the point already made, with reference to Boyce and Bowers (2016) and Snodgrass Rangler (2018), that all (municipalities, schools or principals) are not the same. Furthermore,

it serves as a reminder not only about variation as such, but also that variations tend to become greater as we move closer to principal practices. Hence, linking big data with small data, and alternately zooming in and zooming out, becomes particularly important.

Of equal importance is altering the perspectives. Given the current knowledge about school leaders' impact on teachers, and indirectly on student performance (Wahlstrom et al., 2010; Seashore Louis, 2015), it is no surprise that policymakers in Sweden, as in many other countries, are concerned with turnover and mobility among principals. However, principal turnover cannot be assumed to always be a problem, or a problem for everyone, everywhere. Sometimes, a change in leadership is just what it takes for a school to develop, just as a change of workplace is sometimes just what is needed for a principal to choose to remain in the profession. Moreover, with regard to the importance of altering perspectives, principal turnover can be treated as a sign of an anomaly or mal-administration (e.g. an unhealthy environment, too many or too difficult tasks and/or lack of education, support), or it can be treated as a problem in itself.

Conclusively, in order to understand if, when and for whom principal turnover is a problem, it is necessary to investigate the locations and landscapes where it occurs. That means studying principals' professional practices and its enabling and constraining arrangements, as well as other interrelated practices, mutually shaping and being shaped by one another (Kemmis et al., 2014).

Since the variations presented in this article cannot be explained by the data itself or by results from other studies relevant to the matter, further research is required. Therefore, the study will be

followed up by several municipal case studies based on conscious selection, informed by the results presented in this article.

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Appendix 1.

Principals active in 2017. Municipalities above the upper 10th percentile and below the 10th percentile according to 'average number of school changes per year worked' in the municipality.

Municipalities above the upper 10th percentile				Municipalities below the lower 10th percentile			
Municipality	Type of municipality	N	M	Municipality	Type of municipality	N	M
Dorotea	Sparsely populated area	.	0.83	Boxholm	Rural	.	0.00
Ydre	Rural	.	0.62	Dals-Ed	Rural	.	0.00
Härnösand	Rural	13	0.40	Munkfors	Rural	.	0.00
Hagfors	Rural	6	0.37	Norberg	Rural	6	0.00
Torsås	Rural	.	0.33	Bjurholm	Sparsely populated area	.	0.00
Perstorp	Rural	7	0.31	Norsjö	Sparsely populated area	.	0.00
Gnesta	Urban	6	0.29	Arjeplog	Sparsely populated area	.	0.00
Ljusnarsberg	Rural	.	0.29	Åmål	Rural	12	0.02
Nora	Rural	6	0.29	Älvkarleby	Urban	6	0.03
Vilhelmina	Sparsely populated area	10	0.29	Bräcke	Sparsely populated area	6	0.03
Simrishamn	Rural	18	0.28	Svalöv	Urban	12	0.04
Falkenberg	Rural	29	0.28	Hällefors	Rural	.	0.05
Sunne	Rural	12	0.28	Strömsund	Sparsely populated area	8	0.05
Lycksele	Sparsely populated area	7	0.28	Åsele	Sparsely populated area	.	0.05
Osby	Rural	12	0.27	Gällivare	Sparsely populated area	13	0.05
Öckerö	Metropolitan area	9	0.27	Värnamo	Rural	18	0.06
Eda	Rural	7	0.27	Bromölla	Rural	8	0.06
Mora	Rural	17	0.27	Töreboda	Rural	7	0.06
Tierp	Rural	6	0.26	Vansbro	Sparsely populated area	6	0.06
Halmstad	Urban	63	0.26	Överkalix	Sparsely populated area	.	0.06

Orust	Rural	15	0.26	Olofström	Rural	8	0.07
Surahammar	Rural	12	0.26	Ronneby	Rural	15	0.07
Varberg	Rural	46	0.25	Sjöbo	Rural	17	0.07
Tibro	Rural	7	0.25	Degerfors	Rural	6	0.07
Kramfors	Rural	10	0.25	Huddinge	Metropolitan area	37	0.08
Sigtuna	Metropolitan area	28	0.24	Haninge	Metropolitan area	44	0.08
Strängnäs	Rural	25	0.24	Hörby	Rural	13	0.08
Nybro	Rural	18	0.24	Vännäs	Rural	8	0.08
Härryda	Metropolitan area	37	0.24	Ljusdal	Sparsely populated area	14	0.09

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The First Teacher as the Elephant in the Room – Forgotten and Hidden Teacher Leadership Perspectives in Swedish Schools

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Abstract

International research has highlighted teacher leadership as a means to improve teaching and learning by distributing instructional (learning-centered) leadership to teacher leaders. Simultaneously, there has been an increase and alteration of teacher leaders in schools. One example is the 'first teacher' position in Sweden implemented in 2013. The article builds on an inductive, empirical study made in four Swedish schools. I conducted 34 semi-structured interviews with teachers, first teachers, assistant principals, and principals to explore how different school actors understand first teacher leadership and how this enables and constrains the construction of teacher leadership for teaching and learning. In the analysis, I concluded that the participants understand first-teacher leadership as horizontal and facilitative. Their understanding, built on egalitarian and autonomous norms, collides with the intensions of a changed role to improve teaching and learning. The result implies a hidden first-teacher function. In the article, I argue teacher leadership, as a concept, has been forgotten in Swedish research literature and schools, even though Sweden has had teacher leaders for decades. Increased exploration of first-teacher leadership in Swedish schools can contribute to a more visualised and nuanced understanding of teacher leadership and its impact on teaching and learning.

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Introduction

During the last few decades, research about educational leadership has moved away from studying a strong single leader towards a view on leadership as a process constructed by several actors (Yukl, 2012; Northouse, 2016). A distributed leadership perspective has gained ground and is today a common perspective within leadership research, as well as the instructional perspective. As a result, research about how leadership can be distributed to teachers, as instructional leaders for their teacher peers outside the classroom, has attracted more attention (Gumus et al., 2018; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). The opportunity for principals to distribute instructional leadership to competent teachers has been argued in international research as desirable because the principals' impact on the teachers' knowledge and abilities, and thereby the students' results, has been shown to be limited (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012). However, in Swedish research literature in the last few decades, *teacher leaders* outside the classroom seem to have fallen out of mind.

The conceptualisation of 'teacher leadership' is complex and elusive (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Teacher leadership can be understood as leading students inside the classroom and as leading teacher peers outside the classroom. In this paper I focus on the latter conceptualisation, which buils on theories about instructional leadership, professional development, and distributed leadership.

This conceptualisation has emerged as an important aspect of conceptualising school leadership in the past few decades (Mangin, 2005). Focusing on teacher leadership outside the classroom highlights teacher leaders as potential leaders for professional learning and teaching improvement (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). International research about teacher leadership has highlighted teacher leaders as valuable assets to school improvement because of their direct access to the classroom, their close relations to teacher peers and their attention to teaching and teaching development (Wenner & Campbell, 2017; Grootenboer, Edwards-Groves & Rönnerman, 2015). It has been argued that teacher leaders, in this way, can lead to improved teaching.

Teacher leaders are sometimes called teacher *middle* leaders because of their position between the school leader and the teachers. With one foot still in the classroom they have a unique position to lead for teaching improvement. As middle leaders, it is argued, they can bridge the educational work in classrooms and the management practices of school leaders (Lillejord & Børte, 2018; Rönnerman, Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2018; Harris & Jones, 2017; Wenner & Campbell, 2017), such as leading professional learning groups and coaching teacher peers.

Despite these potential gains for teaching improvement, teacher leaders, as a resource, seem globally ambiguous (Lillejord & Børte, 2018). International research has shown instructional (learning-centred) teacher leadership can be hard to construct because of the existing cultural aspects in schools (Lillejord & Børte, 2018; Supovitz, 2018). The learning and teaching norms within the teaching profession have proven to be predicated on autonomy and egalitarianism, which can make teachers resistant to teacher

leadership (e.g., Berg, 2015; Mangin, 2005). There seems to be a disconnection between the predicted opportunities and ideal with implementing teacher leaders and their possibility to construct teacher leadership that contributes to teaching and learning. This disconnection is relevant to consider when implementing new teacher leaders in schools.

In the last few decades, there has been an increase and alternation of teacher leaders in many Western countries, such as New Zealand, the United States, Australia, England, Poland, and Norway (Alvehus et al., 2019; Swedish Ministry of Education, 2012). By policy initiatives, career paths for teachers have been created to enhance the attraction to the teaching profession and to improve teaching (Fisk Natale, Bassett, Gaddis & McKnight, 2013). These initiatives are argued in terms of handling educational challenges and unburdening overloaded principals (Hairon, 2017). Many career reforms have been aimed at the teacher profession to improve teaching and learning in schools. The idea of career pathways reached Sweden in 2013, with the implementation of 'first teachers' (Swedish Ministry of Education, 2012).

The teacher leader is not a new phenomenon in Sweden. For example, there have been teacher team leaders, process leaders, and subject coordinators for decades. However, when reviewing research literature, current Swedish empirical studies about teacher leadership are hard to find. Except for a few studies in recent years (see Rönnerman et al., 2018; Liljenberg, 2016; Alvunger, 2015, 2016), teacher leadership, as a conceptualisation, seems to have been forgotten among Swedish researchers. With the first-teacher position in mind, much uncertainty still exists in relation to teacher leadership. Are the first teachers seen as leaders by the local school

actors (including themselves) and do different school actors accept to be led by the first teachers regarding learning and teaching? These questions depend on how the school actors understand first-teacher leadership. Do they view first-teacher leadership as instructional, democratic, managerial, pedagogical, distributed or something else? How does this enable and constrain the possibilities for first teachers to develop professional learning and teaching? In Sweden, these questions remain unanswered. To sum up, there is a need to explore how Swedish school actors understand teacher leadership.

Purpose

The aim of this study is to explore first-teacher leadership perspectives in Swedish schools. In the article, I explore how teachers, first teachers, assistant principals, and principals understand first-teacher leadership and how this understanding relates to teacher leadership for teaching and learning. The term first-teacher leadership is equated with teacher leadership outside the classroom, focusing on leading teacher peers. The research questions for the study are:

- How do Swedish teachers, first teachers, assistant principals, and principals understand first-teacher leadership?
- How may this understanding enable and constrain the construction of first- teacher leadership?

In the first section, I give a brief background on the Swedish school setting and the implementation of 'first teachers'. In the second part, I present the inductive research method followed by a presentation and discussion of the results from the empirical study. Finally, I end the article with some conclusions and suggestions for further research.

The Swedish School Setting: Changing Educational Leadership Relations

In Sweden, teacher leaders are not a new phenomenon. The idea of career paths for teachers can already be found in the Swedish school commission in 1946 (SOU 2008:52) and different forms of teacher leaders have existed since the 1970s, with different assigned tasks outside the classroom. However, their roles have mainly been facilitative and not understood as instructional leadership (Håkansson & Sundberg, 2018). The principal, as 'primus inter pares' (first among equals), has led the schools without interfering with teaching (cf. Berg, 2015; Helstad & Møller, 2013). Swedish teachers have had the autonomy to control their teaching individually (Berg, 2015) within a flat school hierarchy (Møller, 2009).

However, over the past 25 years, the Swedish school system has experienced several educational reforms to handle low student results, increased segregation in and between schools and a lack of educated teachers (e.g., Imsen, Blossing & Moos, 2017; OECD, 2015). There have been regulations, marketisation, decentralisation, and centralisation. Following global neoliberal trends, there has been an increased focus on school improvement and measurable results. The view on the principal has shifted from school leader to a more managerial leadership perspective (Uljens, Møller, Ärlestig & Fredriksen 2013). Policymakers have implemented several national initiatives for teaching improvement through professional learning groups led by teachers (National Agency for Education, 2019b), challenging the individual autonomy of the teacher profession. The principal and teacher roles are changing. With these alterations in mind, the career pathways for teachers (CPT) reform implemented 2013 in Sweden can be viewed as a product of its time.

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The First Teacher as A New Potential Leader for Teaching and Learning in Swedish Schools

The 'first teacher' position was created in 2013 as a career pathway for teachers, offering experienced and documented skilled teachers a career path. The CPT reform was intended to attract and retain high-quality teachers in the profession and to enhance teachers' professionalism and status, as well as to strengthen the quality of instruction (Alvehus et al., 2019; Swedish Ministry of Education, 2012). To make the status more attractive, the career ladder offers a salary increase of 5,000 Swedish crowns (about a 15-20% salary-increase). In 2019 1.442 million Swedish crowns (about 144 million Euro) were earmarked by the government for the employment of 15,000 first teachers in Sweden (National Agency for Education, 2019a). As a financier and initiator, the Swedish government has designed some overall guidelines. Certified teachers need to have at least four years of teaching experience and a good pedagogical record and to have shown the capacity to improve students' results. As first teachers, they shall continue to work as regular classroom teachers and may also have specific, additional responsibilities, such as supervision of teacher peers or school development projects (ibid.). Apart from these guidelines, the reform leaves room for interpretation. The main responsibility for the first teachers lies in the hands of the local authorities and the principals who have the responsibility to decide on specific tasks and to choose the applicants (Bergh & Englund, 2016). The prerequisites, working conditions, and assignments vary between and within schools (Adolfsson & Alvunger, 2017; Alvunger & Trulsson, 2016). According to previous studies, the CPT reform is challenging central norms among teachers in the Swedish school contexts (The Swedish Agency

for Public Management, 2017) and has endured criticism from school actors for being unclear and unanchored within schools and for creating discord within the teacher community (The Swedish Agency for Public Management, 2016; National Agency for Education, 2014). This criticism has been distinct among Swedish teachers and principals.

The rather new CPT reform offers some new dimensions regarding teacher leadership in Swedish schools. Even if leadership qualities are not explicitly expressed in the guidelines from the government, it has been suggested that principals can distribute instructional leadership to first teachers (cf. SFS, 2013:70). As described above, the phenomenon of teacher leaders is not new in Swedish school contexts, but the integrated differentiation between first teachers and their classroom teacher peers is new. Several studies have shown that first teachers have assignments connected to subject development or broader school improvement, which suggest that first teachers construct practices that could be interpreted as teacher leadership (e.g., Eriksson & Player Koro, 2019; The Swedish Agency for Public Management, 2017; National Agency for Education, 2015; National Agency for Education, 2014). In this sense, first teachers can be viewed as teacher leaders. However, there is still a lack of research about leadership's relation to first teachers and teacher leadership.

Methods

The empirical material for this inductive study was collected through a study in a larger research project and as a part of a doctoral thesis. The study was conducted in 2019 in two medium-sized (50,000 to 150,000 inhabitants) municipalities in different parts of Sweden.

The municipalities were situated within the same education system, seemingly having the same prerequisites: funding, local policies, and strategies. The sampling was made on purposeful grounds (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011), where the municipalities shared the same levels of student results, student welfare, and final grades, including the qualification for further studies. Two compulsory elementary and secondary schools were chosen from each municipality to participate in the study (convenience sampling; Bryman, 2012).

In this current study, I analysed 34 of the semi-structured transcribed interviews (39.5 hours). These interviews were made with teachers (n = 29, in groups), first teachers (n = 14, in groups and individually), assistant principals (n = 7, in groups), and principals (n = 4, individually). Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. To capture explicit and implicit understandings of leadership, the interviews were combined with a self-developed mapping method called the EDUORG network analysis-method. Through this method, the participants mapped different functions and relations in their school organisations with sticky notes on a three-level divided paper sheet. This visualisation facilitated the interview for the participants, including the interviewers. All participants were informed about the aim of the study and that they could terminate their participation at any time. They all gave written informed consent.

Data were collected in two phases. In the first phase, during spring 2019, interviews with principals and first teachers were conducted to gain an overall understanding of the contexts. The interview guide was then reshaped. In the second phase, the same participants were interviewed again and teachers and assistant principal functions were added. Through interviews with different

school actors within the same schools, I wanted to grasp fundamental first teacher leadership perspectives and what impact these had on first teachers' possibilities of leading teaching and professional learning. Thus, the aim was not to create a comparative or evaluative study built on cases.

The data were organised and analysed with the qualitative analysis software NVivo 12 Pro. In the first phase, the transcripts were read several times to identify prominent themes and patterns. I also analysed the maps (the EDUORG Network Analysis) created by the participants during the interviews. Focusing on how teachers, first teachers, assistant principals, and principals talked about and mapped the first teacher function and first-teacher leadership I searched for patterns in the material. The combination of visible and oral reflections enabled methodological

triangulation (Cohen et al., 2011). In the first phase, the material was framed in two major sweeping categories: leadership and the first teacher role. Second, I reread the transcriptions several times and reduced the data by identifying salient domains through analytic coding. I summarised repeated patterns and clustered and created subcategories. Third, I reread the transcriptions to verify and rework the existing codes. Finally, I searched for themes across the codes and created a master outline to express relations within and among the codes. I also chose excerpts to support elements in my outline.

Assignments Connected to First Teachers

Before heading on to the results, some clarifications can be made regarding the current school contexts and the first teachers' assignments. The four schools in the study had similar local organisational structures. They had formal school leadership teams,

consisting of a principal and assistant principals and/or assistant administrators, in some cases combined with teacher team leaders and/or first teachers. All four schools were also organised in teacher teams responsible for a group of students. First teachers and teachers were primarily experienced teachers (teaching experience >10 years), the first teachers were all mainly teaching and were members of teacher teams. Almost all first teachers had additional assignments related to school- and/or teaching development. In one school the first teachers did not have any specific tasks as first teachers, but a majority of them were process leaders, a task equated with the school development assignments of first teachers in the other schools. A majority of the first teachers in the study led organised professional learning groups, where teacher met regularly and focused on a selected theme, such as a teaching method or a particular school subject. A minority had specific areas to develop without responsibilities for specific learning groups. One first teacher was tutoring teachers in another school. In all four schools, the assignments and the first-teacher functions were easier for the principal and the assistant principal to describe than for the first teachers to describe. The teachers found the first-teacher assignments unclear. In the next section, I will describe the results.

Results

The Hidden First Teacher

The teachers in the study expressed that they were unsure about who the first teachers in the school organisations were. In the maps created during the interviews, the first-teacher function was seldom mentioned among almost all school actors, especially among teachers and first teachers. When asked, teachers and first teachers

said that the first teachers were included in the function 'teacher'. The first teachers identified themselves as teachers, not first teachers, and described how they shifted roles depending on the situation. In the classroom and the teacher teams, they were teachers. Most of them only defined themselves as first teachers when carrying out their first-teacher assignments, such as leading professional learning groups. Even in these situations, their relationships to the first-teacher title were ambivalent. Maria described how she avoided using the title first teacher when introducing herself:

> *But […] then it feels like you are higher ranked than a teacher. I mean in the hierarchy and I don't think I am… or I don't want to be the one looking down. But I am a first teacher, I am, but it is nothing that I introduce myself as, I say teacher. (Maria, first teacher)*

Maria talked about how the definition of herself as a first teacher would put her above her teacher peers, a positioning that she could not accept. When asked what would happen if she would introduce herself as a first teacher, Maria said:

> *Nothing would have happened. I don't think so. It… I am, if I may say, I am a little bit against the system with first teachers. In fact, you should reward experienced skilled teachers. There are many skilled teachers who could call themselves first teachers and it went wrong, like "now we don't have more career appointments to assign on this school" so some got one and some not. […] So that's a little bit wrong, we are equally skilled and so on. (Maria, first teacher)*

Maria was not the only first teacher who actively avoided the title 'first teacher' when approaching other teachers. Several of the interviewed first teachers did. The criticised implementation of the CPT reform was often mentioned as one explanation to this phenomenon and teachers, first teachers, assistant principals, and principals stated that they were critical of the reform and the first

teacher function. One teacher explained why the first teacher function was invisible on a map created in a group interview with teachers:

> *I think it's a national problem that it is like this. I think it was unclear from the beginning [the first teacher position]. Is it an appointment you can apply for, and then you are better than the others? Or get more paid than the others? No, but what do I know? Or did you have a certain training that makes you… I think that is strange. Very strange. (Peter, teacher)*

Several times the problematic implementation of the CPT reform was mentioned as a reason why the first teacher function was invisible in the school organisations. Peter asked for justifications to the designations of first teachers and the specific training that makes first teachers more competent to lead. The school actors in the study were all well informed about the national debate regarding the CPT reform and referred to it while talking about the first teacher function and role. They related to general situations that arose some years ago when the reform was implemented, but when asked about current examples, they stated that the situation had improved.

First Teachers as Pares Inter Pares

The first teachers in the study expressed resistance against putting themselves above other teachers. When mapping the actors and functions in their school organisation almost all first teachers put themselves horizontal to their teacher peers. The first teachers claimed that they were good teachers, so did the principals, but the first teachers also emphasised that they were no better than their teacher peers. The limited number of career appointments was perceived as unfair in an organisation where all teachers were stated as equally skilled. However, according to the school leaders, first teachers needed to have the courage to stand out from their teacher peers. As Elsa, assistant principal, put is:

Regarding all these positions [teacher leaders in general], they are teachers that need to dare to stand out. Because, you leave the crowd, you leave your colleagues by having a leading role. Even if you do not have the authority to make decisions, it is in a way as taking a step away. You are a first teacher or a team leader. Then you stand out from the crowd and you have to dare to do that. (Elsa, assistant principal)

The first teachers resisted putting themselves outside the crowd, but the principals and assistant principals had a different view. The principals found it problematic though to reward the first teachers with a higher salary and at the same time require all teachers to contribute to the common goal that all students should learn. As Stephan, principal, described it:

When you have competent and good teachers in a school organisation but you give a pretty heavy salary increment, for something that should be fulfilled within an assignment, it is not 120%, it is an assignment. And at the same time, you have an organisation where you depend on every single teacher doing such a good job as possible, to do a job that sometimes is outside the basic job, then it gets weird. It gets weird if someone gets 5,000 crowns extra to perform something, even if they are good, and there are other teachers who are very good at doing valuable things. It is important that all bring value to the organisation. Then it gets weird. Because I [as a principal] have to require that from all teachers, so it is a weird relation here. It can be like this: wait a minute, you are the first teacher and gets 5,000 crowns more than me, then maybe you should do it.

[…]

Now I found very skilled first teachers that I employed, but the process was hard. The specification of the requirement that I had for first teachers, from the organisation that we had, it was hard for me to find that competence. (Stephan, principal)

Teachers, first teachers, assistant principals, and principals in the study claimed that the goal to create learning opportunities for all students was dependent on the collective work of all teachers in the school organisation. They claimed that all teachers were equally skilled. A difference was that the assistant principals and principals expected the first teachers to stand out from their teacher peers but the teachers and first teachers did not.

A Balancing and Facilitative Leadership from Within

The first teachers in the interviews usually defined themselves as leaders but did not think the teachers in the organisations would. The interviews with the teachers confirmed this expectation. The assistant principals and the principals, on the other hand, associated first teachers with the term 'leader' more naturally but expressed uncertainty about if and how to construct first teacher leadership in the school organisations. As principals they decided on the theme for the assignments, and the first teachers were then expected to construct first-teacher leadership in relation to the content of the theme.

First teachers engage mainly in practices that could be described as facilitative leadership. They are expected to inspire their teacher peers on more or less formal arenas (e.g., as members in the teacher teams or by leading colleagues in professional learning groups). The first teachers support their teacher peers by presenting materials thought to be useful for their teaching practices. The materials are mainly embodied by literature, chosen because of timeliness and concrete methods. The materials are first approved by the principal and are often recommended by other teachers (e.g., in social media,), or mentioned by Swedish school authorities (e.g., The National Agency of Education). First teachers in the study described the

importance of choosing content applicable and relevant for their teacher peers. Lisa, first teacher, when asked if first teachers were supposed to challenge their teacher peers, said the following:

> *No, I don't think so. It's more about working with [the theme of the unit], and to see what pops up. Because they [the first teachers] are somehow also participants at the same time as leaders. But, their focus is not to take up space but to make others do the job. More to help them get in the right direction so that they don't… […] get away and start talking about a single student, for example. That you remain focused, it's more about that. We don't have [first teachers] to challenge [their teacher peers] to get further, it's more about awakening thoughts and to get them to explore themselves. What am I doing, what am I doing very well, what do I have to develop? So it's more about helping in that process, I think. (Lisa, first teacher)*

This is a description of how first teachers, who are leading professional learning groups, are supposed to distribute material and create democratic and effective meetings built on dialogues in the learning groups. When leading teacher peers, they participate in the meeting as learning colleagues and move in and out of the first teacher role. As Erik, first teacher, put it when asked about what to know when leading colleagues:

> *Well, I think it's about being a gentle leader because I'm not a leader, I'm not a boss. I should help my colleagues getting as much as possible out of different projects, so it's not about me having a special competence to share with the others, it's more about assuring that everyone has the right to speak and that they all get something out of it. It's more about that, to coordinate and to make sure there is a good atmosphere in the meetings. (Erik, first teacher)*

Erik put equal signs between leadership and being a boss and denied being a leader himself. Simultaneously, he said that he had to be a gentle leader. The importance of being a gentle leader horizontally positioned among the teacher colleagues was also

expressed by other first teachers, such as Lisa. When asked about what would happen if a first teacher would put him-/herself above teacher peers to lead them, she said:

> *I have no clue. I think it depends on how you do it. If you invite everyone but at the same time are accurate and clear, there is no problem. But if you assume that now I am above anyone, then it's a bit… I think. Because it's about how you do it. You can do it nicely and less nicely, I think. (Lisa, first teacher)*

In the schools where first teachers' assignments were less structured, it was harder for the first teachers to describe their leadership. Anna, first teacher, described her ambivalent relation to leadership. When communicating with students within her first teacher assignment, she made decisions, but in relation to her teacher peers as a group, it was harder. She solved it by finding single teachers to inspire:

> *Well, it is in conversations with others. You notice how they ask: "Do you have something" and… When we have meetings with the whole staff and we have attended a lecture […] we talk a little bit about that and then: "Yes, but do you have any material"? So, like that. (Anna, first teacher)*

The strategy to impact through inspiration was present in several first teachers' narratives. The first teachers waited for their teacher peers to ask for advice or material instead of giving them instructions on what to do. To sum up, the first teachers in the study tried to lead horizontally by being facilitators for their teacher peers and without steering their teacher peers in a certain direction by telling them what to do.

Natural Leaders with an Unnecessary Title?

When asked about what a first teacher should know, the competence of teaching was mentioned as important by all functions in the study and included personal traits, such as sensitivity, curiosity

and flexibility. The first teachers described themselves as energetic personalities, with a history of being interested in school improvement and trying new teaching methods. For Susanne, first teacher, the function as a teacher leader was not new:

> *It was the same thing before. Yes, there have been many titles for it: team leader, study leader, and development leader. There have been many names for it, and many pieces in the first leader assignments have been there too and have had other names too.*
>
> *[…]*
>
> *And then, in some way […] because it's an official name, it has become something else for the colleagues maybe, a more important step than when named study leader or development leader. Because this is more of a title. But the work itself is not, I think, not such a big difference, other than that you had to apply and write a little bit.*
>
> *[…]*
>
> *The 5,000 crowns are nice. I shall not hide that, because they are. And I think we work for them [the money], but to be honest, I do as I do anyway. I worked like this before I had the title too. It's like, I'm interested in this. I want this. And I can't help it. So that's why it's nice that you got something for it. (Susanne, first teacher).*

All first teachers in the study described themselves as driven by an interest in developing teaching to make it better for their students. This would not change if they stopped being a first teacher, they said. They would do the tasks anyway, even if the salary supplement was a nice contribution. In this way, the construction of a new teacher leader role, the one as a first teacher, becomes less important. From Susanne's point of view, the difference between other teacher leader roles and the first teacher role was primarily that it was a title with a hierarchal undertone.

Discussion

An Ambivalent First Teacher Leadership Perspective

When exploring teachers', first teachers', assistant principals', and principals' understandings of first-teacher leadership, several leadership perspectives became visible through the study. At first glance, first-teacher leadership is understood as a gentle, horizontal, and facilitative practice, especially when leading professional development groups. This understanding may enable horizontal first-teacher leadership in professional learning groups, where all teachers collectively are supposed to have the opportunity to improve their teaching practices. First teachers are expected to lead democratic processes where all teachers learn together. In this sense, all teachers could be leaders, which could be interpreted as a distributed leadership perspective (see Spillane, 2006). First-teacher leadership is seen as a relational process where first teachers are expected to have a positive impact on the collective professional development process, that implicit rather than explicit effect individual teachers and how they teach in their classrooms. As Lisa pointed out, it is more about getting the teachers to explore themselves. Every single teacher is set to lead their teaching (i.e. they are instructional leaders for themselves).

By offering relevant literature and methods, first teachers seek to inspire their teacher colleagues, but the decisions about how to construct teaching in the classroom is seen as an individual matter for every single teacher. Leading by inspiring and facilitating teacher peers is a leadership strategy the participants already knew from other teacher leader functions, as teacher team leaders and subject coordinators. The new first-teacher role does not interfere with the existing autonomous and egalitarian norms in the schools. According

to Mangin (2005), the facilitative strategy can be seen as a stepping-stone towards instructional-focused interaction, but, on the other hand, it is time-consuming and unchallenging. This may, according to Mangin, reduce its chances to create professional learning. From this point of view, the concessions made by the first teachers may constrain their impacts on teaching (cf. Mangin, 2005; i.e., their possibility to lead instructionally). The participants' understanding of the facilitative role of the position may constrain the construction of instructional first-teacher leadership by neglecting the need to challenge existing learning and teaching norms. However, on the other hand, it may also be a successful strategy to lead without interfering by using autonomous and egalitarian norms. The effects of first-teacher leadership are still unknown and therefore need more attention and research.

First-teacher leadership seems to be surrounded by implicit prohibitions created within social boundaries. According to the participants, first teachers shall not make decisions, and they shall not claim that they are more skilled than other teachers are. They shall not even call themselves first teachers. By handing over the decision making to the principal and the compass for teaching development to popular pedagogical literature, first teachers try to avoid conflicts between their new middle leader positions and the existing egalitarian norms among the teachers. One of the first teachers, Erik, expressed the ambivalent relation to teacher leadership when he concluded that he was not a leader because he was not a boss. The excerpt signals he understands leadership as traditionally managerial and vertical. This understanding of leadership collides with the egalitarian norms in the teacher community, which makes vertical relations problematic. The first teacher position is, by its design, understood as a way to build in vertical hierarchal structures in the

flat hierarchy of Swedish schools and, thereby, a threat against the egalitarian norms. The result is that first teachers, such as Erik, try to reject their first teacher positions. The position exists as a career pathway, but the function as first teacher is hidden. Additional assignments are expected due to the higher salaries (cf. Hardy & Rönnerman, 2018). However, the maps created during the interviews show these practices remain hidden or isolated.

The Elephant in the Room

Instead of constructing a new teacher leadership built on their competence as skilled teachers, the first teachers in the study tried to blend in. They kept themselves within the social boundaries of the teacher community, a community they were dependent on in their teaching practices. As Maria pointed out, introducing herself as first teacher would put her above her teacher colleagues. This phenomenon was also found in previous international research about teacher leaders (e.g. Helstad & Mausethagen, 2019; Lillejord & Børte, 2018; Supovitz, 2018; Seland et al., 2017; Liljenberg, 2016; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015). When leadership usually is understood as vertical, hierarchical, and managerial, it is hard to combine teachers as leaders for their peers.

Fairman and Mackenzie (2015) suggested teachers are uncomfortable with leadership titles because the titles build in hierarchical relationships among peers. This conclusion coincides with the results of my study, indicating the description of first-teacher leadership as a formal *middle* leadership may be problematic in egalitarian school contexts, such as Sweden. Thus, the way the CPT reform was designed may constrain the possibility of constructing as new form of teacher leadership. The excerpts show teachers and first teachers were unfamiliar with talk about teacher leadership, and that

this, in combination with egalitarian and autonomous norms, transformed the first teachers into the elephant in the room. The assistant principals and principals hesitated in distributing instructional leadership to first teachers. If the aim of the career pathway is to improve teaching by first-teacher leadership, researchers and practitioners, should explore ways to have constructive and developing dialogues about first teacher leadership to enable boundary crossing (see Lorentzen, 2019).

Forgotten Leadership Competences in Relation to First Teachers

First teachers were appointed to their positions because they had proven to be skilled teachers. However, in the study, the teachers and first teachers opposed the idea that they had a particular competence. According to them, all teachers were equally skilled. Certain first teacher competences were negated, and their teacher peers did not see first teachers as leaders. For example, one of the principals in the study, Stephan, reflected on the challenges to find first teachers with relevant competences and the teacher Peter, questioned the difference between teachers and first teachers regarding competence. If first teachers are not more skilled to teach, their legitimacy to lead instructionally may be hollowed. Instead, they are expected to lead through facilitation. This is a practice independent of their teaching skills and a practice possible for all teachers, which makes their positions unclear.

Even the first teachers hesitated to call themselves leaders. When they did, they described themselves as leaders with inherent leadership traits. The teachers in the study called for a specific first teacher competence to motivate why some teachers should have specific formal positions and be paid more. Their documented ability as skilled teachers was not seen as enough legitimacy for them to lead

instructionally. Previous research has shown leadership competence is rarely requested by the appointment of first teachers (The Swedish Agency for Public Management, 2017). No specific leadership training is offered or requested by the first teachers. In conclusion, leadership is forgotten, neglected or counteracted in relation to the first teacher position.

Conclusions

In this article, I conclude that first-teacher leadership is not used in its full potential. Teachers, first teachers, assistant principals, and principals understand first-teacher leadership foremost as facilitative. First teachers lead professional development groups and/or inspire their teacher peers by offering examples of literature and methods. The facilitative leadership is already well known in the school organisations and the first teachers, thereby, do not challenge existing autonomous and egalitarian teaching and learning norms. The participants in the study have an ambivalent relation to first-teacher leadership. Leadership, as a general conception, is understood as vertical and is associated with differentiation, decision-making, management, and single leaders with specific traits or competences. This form of leadership is reserved for the principal. Teacher leadership, on the other hand, is understood as a horizontal and democratic practice where leadership for learning is distributed collectively. The participants' understanding of teacher leadership collides with the first teacher title, which is understood as vertical. The result is that first teachers are transformed into the elephant in the room and that their functions are hidden or isolated. In the introduction, I described the ideal image of teacher leadership, expressed in international research literature, where principals

distribute instructional leadership to teacher leaders. Whether this form of teacher leadership is ideal for the Swedish school contexts and whether first-teacher leadership is a possible way to improve teaching in Sweden is still unknown. However, the analysis of the study indicates that it may be hard to construct first-teacher leadership when the first-teacher function and competence is hidden, the legitimacy of the first teacher is questioned, the egalitarian and autonomous norms reject the need for instructional leadership, and leadership is understood as a vertical and managerial practice reserved for single leaders.

Even if the small sample size does not allow generalisations, it contributes to a discussion about what first-teacher leadership is and can be. In conclusion, when leadership is forgotten in the implementation of new teacher leaders, the construction of teacher leadership may be constrained. To construct first-teacher leadership for teaching and learning, researchers and practitioners should transparently explore how to nuance, visualise and create democratic dialogues about teacher leadership perspectives in Swedish schools. These investments could determine the development of teacher leadership in Sweden in the future, including first-teacher leadership. The suggestion of building more differentiations between teachers (SOU, 2018:17) makes these questions even more relevant.

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Developing Leadership by Participating in Principal Professional Learning Communities (PPLCs) and the Added Value of Transnational Collaboration

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Abstract

This article presents a case study aiming to encourage and support principals from six countries to work in Principal Professional Learning Communities (PPLCs) to enhance their leadership competencies and foster strong leadership for school development and teacher learning. We argue that the need for principals to participate in a PLC is a fundamental but also forgotten perspective in school leadership. Our most important findings indicate that the principals participating in a PPLC gained (1) enhanced leadership skills, (2) awareness of and security in their own leadership roles, (3) new knowledge about organisation and implementation of PLCs and (4) appreciation of the importance of PLCs. An added value was the benefit of meeting peers from different countries, which contributed to their reflections about their own school systems and practices. We argue that facilitation and support is important to establishing effective PPLCs and that external support may be considered to create a structure for and to strengthen the outcomes of PPLCs. We further argue that local

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authorities should reinstate or restructure these meetings so that principals can focus on teaching and discuss the subject with their peers. Data for the study were collected through pre/post-surveys, in-depth interviews, reflection notes and audio recordings of workshops, world café meetings, a SWOT analysis, and group discussions.

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Introduction

This article is based on a study that explores how being part of a principal professional learning community (PPLC) may foster strong leadership for school development and teacher learning. Our study examines how participation in PPLCs may enhance the leadership development of principals, either by contributing to the development of teacher PLCs or through participation in an important transnational network. The participants have been part of HeadsUP, an Erasmus+ project involving peers from six countries that aims to provide more effective teacher development in schools by having the principals expand their leadership competencies within regional PPLCs. The study provides important insights into how different frameworks and cultures can impact the creation of and participation in PPLCs and impact opportunities for developing teacher PLCs.

The potential for professional learning communities (PLCs) to improve student learning is widely accepted (Hord, 1997, 2004; Louis, Kruse, & Bryk, 1995; Rosenholtz, 1989; Vangrieken, Dochy, Raes, & Kyndt, 2015), and their development and utilisation is high on the agendas of many European countries. Most studies related to these

communities focus on teacher PLCs and/or the role of leaders in the facilitation of teacher PLCs, thereby neglecting that the fundamental success of a school leader depends on the continuous development of leadership skills. Researchers who conducted the few studies that explored the participation of principals in PPLCs argued that the principals gain a greater understanding of the need for teacher PLCs and at the same time develop their own levels of professionalism (Gaudioso, 2017; Hipp & Weber, 2008; Hirsch & Hord, 2008; Miller, 2012). It is fundamental for the design of the PPLC to change from encouraging participants to merely build on their own experiences to encouraging them to elucidate those experiences with leadership theory and by actively using student learning data in their own development as leaders.

A common finding of studies that examined the importance of participating in PPLCs is that involvement in these activities is important for helping leaders to understand what a PLC is, which, in turn, increases their awareness about what is required to develop and maintain a PLC (Crestone & Jerome, 2009). By participating in PPLCs, school leaders gain insight into building a learning culture, which is important for developing PLCs in their own schools. Some studies show that participation in a PPLC helps principals assess and develop their own professional skills as leaders by providing the opportunity for them to reflect together with their peers on facilitating teaching, cooperation and pupil achievements in otherwise isolated, day-to-day affairs (Gaudioso, 2017; Hipp & Weber, 2008; Hirsch & Hord, 2008; Miller, 2012; Tupponce, 2018). Participation increases knowledge and builds skills so that pupil learning can be improved, but capacity across schools needs to be built to improve sustainability in all schools. By contributing to and supporting each other in a PPLC, the leaders performed better than

they could have done alone. Elmore and Burnay (1999) and Fink and Resnick (2001) highlighted the importance of restructuring meetings of the heads of schools so they can focus on teaching, giving them the opportunity to learn about and discuss pedagogical practices. However, few studies have investigated how PPLCs develop over time. In this study we followed a project that aimed to build PPLCs over time by having the principals expand their leadership competencies within both regional and transnational PPLCs. The key question guiding this study was: How does the participation of school principals in a PPLC foster strong leadership for school development and teacher learning?

Theoretical Framework

Our theoretical framework is based on theories generated though research on PLC. We first present main points from previous literature about PLC, before we present literature that is specific about PPLC. This forms a conceptual framework for the discussion of our findings.

PLCs are a powerful tool in school development and improvement, where the quality of education is highly dependent on teachers' continuous renewal of their professional knowledge and skills throughout their entire career (Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei, Alethea, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). To ensure the effectiveness of PLCs, attention must be paid both to school leaders as mentors in the learning communities and to the special responsibility principals have in facilitating adequate learning conditions (Leithwood & Louis, 2012).

Schools that have developed a PLC culture share several characteristics: common values and vision, collective responsibility

for student learning, reflection and reflective professional examinations, individual and group professional learning experiences, and supportive and shared leadership (Bolam et al., 2005; Hord, 1997; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). Thus, a PLC can be described as a group sharing common goals, working together to reach those goals, assessing their progress, making necessary changes and holding themselves responsible for attaining their shared goals (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2010; Stoll et al., 2006; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Heads of schools or principals can constitute a PPLC across schools with the purpose of developing as leaders, based on their obligations and professional responsibility for their pupils' learning outcomes (Talbert & MacLauchlin, 2010). School leaders are seen as change agents who are in the position to facilitate and support teachers' learning, lead development and create cultures that increase the quality of teaching and improve student learning (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016; Hallinger, 2003; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Tupponce, 2018).

Some studies have examined the importance of school leaders' participation in a PLC. The findings of those studies indicate that participating in a PPLC impacts a leader's understanding of what a PLC is, which, in turn, means that leaders increase their awareness of what is required to develop and maintain a PLC; further, by participating in a PPLC, school leaders can learn about and understand how to build a learning culture—knowledge that will benefit them when building PLCs in their own schools (David, 2009; Gaudioso, 2018). Fahey (2011) argued that leaders can increase their understanding of how to build learning-focused, reflecting professional communities by developing and participating in their own PPLCs, where they will work with models that show them how to reflect on learning in PLCs in their own schools. They can then

assess the leadership practice, de-privatise their own practices, give and receive feedback, and reflect on their own leadership role. Fahey (2011) stated this experience was precisely what they wanted to have in their own school.

Participation in a PPLC impacts the practices of leaders and their perceptions of PPLCs as unique arenas for learning about their own practices through a continuous process of reflecting together with other leaders on facilitating effective teaching, cooperation and pupil achievements in otherwise isolated, day-to-day affairs (Gaudioso, 2018; Hipp & Weber, 2008; Hirsch & Hord, 2008; Miller, 2012). It is important to understand what constitutes an effective PLC if the aim is to support PLCs in schools. This understanding is gained through participation in a PLC, because authentic and meaningful learning is important, and it is reinforced when learning takes place within one's own personal context (Dickson & Mitchell, 2014; Tupponce, 2018).

Hirsch and Hord (2008) maintained that participants in a PPLC learn because they can reflect together with other school leaders on challenges in their own schools and then collaborate to discover methods for overcoming the challenges. Together they can enhance their understanding of which learning processes can develop knowledge and skills in their own schools. Hipp and Weber (2008) researched the development of a PPLC for heads of schools across school districts; their study showed that participation increases knowledge and builds skills so that pupil learning can be improved, but capacity across schools needs to be built to improve sustainability in all schools. By contributing to and supporting each other in a PPLC, the leaders performed better than they could have done alone. Elmore and Burnay (1999) and Fink and Resnick (2001) highlighted

the importance of restructuring the meetings of the heads of school so they can focus on teaching, giving them the opportunity to learn about and discuss teaching. They were then expected to lead this type of discussion in their own schools. By structuring learning processes, a culture can be created where the heads of schools move from sharing problems to more actively discussing research literature and teaching practices (Austin, Grossman, Schwartz, & Suesse, 2007). Studying and reflecting on one's own experiences is a way of life, a lifestyle, Dickson and Mitchell (2014) claimed, but time must be set aside for meetings where this can be done; moreover, problem formulations that are connected to real problems are needed (Daniel, 2009).

'Learning is restricted to what the PLC members know and the skills they can share. This strategy is a quick and effective way to enhance learning as long as the competence to satisfy a need or a goal exists in the group' (Hirst & Hord, 2008, p. 34). On the occasion that expertise on a specific skill or in a certain knowledge area is lacking in the group, external support will be needed. Local authorities can play an important role in facilitating PPLCs so that leaders can develop their leadership by learning through experience and improving their skills (Gaudioso, 2017). Indeed, a number of studies have examined how advisors or mentors from the local administrative level contribute to enabling PLCs in schools (Dickson & Mitchell, 2014; Servais, Derrington, & Sanders, 2009).

Servais, Derrington and Sanders (2009) researched PPLCs through which heads of schools and advisors from the local administrative level developed individually and together. Relationships, time, structures and skills were important factors that needed to be addressed at the same time to develop a PPLC. The study

revealed that it was challenging to cooperate because the advisors were from a higher level, which prevented the heads of schools from freely sharing problems, frustrations and concerns; hence, it did not feel as meaningful and relevant to participate for all the heads of schools. The findings pointed out that the advisors had to see themselves as equals in a dialogic process where there was enough trust and support for open and authentic dialogue. Honig and Rainey (2014) examined how PPLCs with support from central administrative staff could contribute to transforming leaders into leaders of teaching. The study concluded that administrative advisors will be able to guide if they focus on teaching and are able to facilitate for learning rather than issuing directives.

Methods

The current study is designed as an intrinsic case study, aiming to provide insight and understanding by thoroughly studying all aspects of a specific situation or phenomenon (Stake, 1995). In this study we examined one case, the HeadsUP project, an EU initiative funded by Erasmus+ that includes principals from Sweden, Austria, Germany, Cyprus, Spain and Norway together with participants from universities in the respective countries (except for Sweden, where there are school owners who participate together with their principals). The project's goal was for the principals to develop their expertise in leading teachers' learning and collaboration and structuring collaboration in their schools as PLCs.

The project's guidelines state the following:

> *The principals who take part in a PLC receive valuable inputs for professional reflection by other members of their PLC as well as from experts and peers at transnational project meetings, leadership conferences and a learning platform.*

> *The transnational cooperation provides all participating principals with the opportunity to understand different school systems, see other possibilities of leading a school, and get new ideas for initiating learning activities from schools across borders. (HeadsUP, 2019, p.5)*

The project is organised according to a 'doubledecker' model, which involves principals of the different countries organised into regional PPLCs with the aim of developing their leadership skills. The concept of the double-decker is referred to as follows:

> *When school development as well as teaching development takes place not only in PLCs on the school leaders' level but also on the teachers' level. The HeadsUP-Project aims at encouraging and supporting principals to work in PLCs and to familiarise with this method. Furthermore, HeadsUP aims at strengthening their leadership competencies and so enable them to guide their school's teaching staff into such cooperation among teachers, support them and build up the necessary structures, so that teachers can develop further their teaching competencies in a process of joint learning*[1].

HeadsUP aims to give principals experience with methods that can support their work, while they work continuously in a PPLC to support their own and their peers' efforts to build structures for PLCs that support teachers in improving their skills for successful teaching and classroom management. Furthermore, the principals can benefit from the transnational exchange of perspectives on leadership and school improvement. In the end, the goal is for all of these steps to effect a change in day-to-day classroom work and for pupils to benefit from better teaching.

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[1]Quote from the Homepage of HeadsUP, downloaded from: https://sites.google.com/site/plcheadsup/

As part of the HeadsUP project, the participating principals were presented with different methods and theories during transnational seminars, as both principals and academics from each country brought examples and input to the seminars. They shared experiences with and expertise on communications skills, how to develop inquiry, studies on lessons and learning, problem solving processes, methods that enhance collaboration and relevant literature, all of which was presented on the HeadsUP website.

To capture the complexity of the case and strengthen internal validity, data were obtained from multiple sources (triangulation), a key feature of a case study (Stake, 1995). The data were collected through pre/post-surveys with principals and the teachers involved in the PLCs in each of the six countries, in-depth interviews with the principals who participated in the multiplier events and evaluations of each network meeting. In addition, data were obtained from reflective notes on audio recordings of workshops, world café meetings, a SWOT analysis and group discussions. The use of a wide range of data collection methods resulted in a solid data base. Quantitative data were primarily used to support and strengthen the other findings and, therefore, were not regarded independently or analysed in isolation. The survey data reflected a broad array of information, while the qualitative data contributed to comprehensive in-depth knowledge on the study topic. The qualitative data were analysed in two phases. First, all parts of the data were passed separately to create an open coding. Open coding is an analysis method derived from grounded theory, through which the constant comparative analysis method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was developed. In the second phase, we categorised the codes across the entire data material. Through open coding we came up with four main categories: (1) leadership skills, (2) awareness and security in

their own leadership roles, (3) organisation and implementation of PLCs and (4) appreciating the importance of PLCs. The categories formed the structure of the presentation of the empirical findings.

Empirical Findings

The aim of the study is to shed light on the research question: How does the participation of school principals in a PPLC foster strong leadership for school development and teacher learning?

Leadership skills

The development of several specific leadership skills were mentioned as outcomes of participation in a PPLC. A relatively high number of memos and notes in the data contain statements about how leadership skills can be developed by participating in a community with other principals in one's own country and about establishing a PLC in one's own school. During the transnational meetings, principals were presented with new tools and ways of working to create a learning culture; they also gained insight into the theoretical base on which the tools were based and had the opportunity to try out the tools together with their peers from the different countries. This positively impacted their motivation to continue working to develop a PLC culture in their respective countries and schools. A selection of quotes from participant statements reflecting leadership skill development during the PPLC follows:

- 'Bringing back home: Organisation and structure to make my teacher PLC even better. Use the experience from the principal PLC to a larger extent'.
- 'Cooperation and collaboration in teams generate change'.

- ‘Give clearer structures to my teachers’.
- ‘Giving and receiving feedback from colleagues is important’.
- ‘Be more open and share’.
- ‘Positive perspective of leadership and focus on learning’.

Several of the participants commented that they developed their communication skills by participating in the transnational meeting, as they received theoretical input and joined workshops focusing on communication and relational trust. Through this they learned to be more flexible and patient as leaders because they better understand the perspectives of others. They also said that by participating in a PPLC, their organisational and time management skills improved, and several stated that they simply improved in how they lead. Following are examples of statements about the positive outcomes of the PPLC that illustrate these points:

- ‘Improving my communication skills thanks to PPLC’.
- ‘Becoming more flexible, patient, empathic – to step into other people’s shoes’.
- ‘Manage time and help the group leader manage time’.
- ‘Helps to develop my leadership skills’.

Data from questionnaires, evaluations and interviews with the HeadsUP participants indicated that by participating in a PPLC, the principals obtained a better understanding of how to be a learning leader and how to build a learning culture: both were pivotal to the creation of a PLC in their own schools. The importance of trust and relations in the transnational meetings was highlighted as very important by many in the evaluation notes and ‘brought home’ when regional PLC groups were to be launched and implemented. Many participants said that they have worked on establishing trustful

relations and on being active members of their own PPLC groups, while some were in the initial stages of implementing PLCs in their own schools.

What several participants mentioned is that the organisation and structuring of the networks involving school principals has transfer value for working with their own teachers and realising the importance of working in teams, while the collaboration with other school principals put a positive focus on learning.

Awareness of and confidence in the leader role

A recurring message from the data is that it is important for a principal's self-confidence to meet and discuss issues with other leaders, as this bolsters confidence in one's own decisions and improves skills in planning and coordinating teachers. The exchange of experiences and challenges through discussion in the PPLC groups, both regional and transnational, improved their ability to reflect on the choices a leader has to make. This sentiment was expressed by one of the German principals, who stated: 'Through the mutual exchange you get insight into the actions of colleagues. This promotes your own reflection.' Many memos and notes directly referred to principals' improvement of their self-confidence as leaders through participating in a PPLC:

- 'Meeting and discussing with other principals on a regular basis makes a difference for my self-confidence'.
- 'Increasing confidence in decision-making'.
- 'Knowing there's someone I can trust, talk to, ask questions, makes you more self-confident'.

In addition, some principals observed that they have become more aware of what is needed to achieve change. During an interview, a Swedish principal stated:

I have grown as a leader. I'm more self-confident. I dare to challenge my colleagues in a deeper way than before. I can be uncomfortable. I'm also better at giving feedback. I think I show them that I see that they grow as leaders. I'm challenging myself much more now than before. I think and reflect in another deeper way, and I know that I have to change in order to make a change.

All sections of the data material included references to the importance of speaking to school principals from other countries because those exchanges influence how the principals think about their own practices. Related excerpts from the reflection notes are provided below:

- 'Talking to principals from different countries makes me think a little bit differently about my own practices'.
- 'Similar challenges and solutions in different countries'.
- 'Many differences between the educational systems. Specific educational systems require different leaders'.
- 'Sharing experiences is inspiring and makes me look critically at my own leadership'.

During the interviews, some of the principals claimed that speaking with school principals from other countries, and, thus, gaining insight into other school systems, led to their increased reflection on their own practices. A German principal expressed this idea as follows:

The visits to other countries provide interesting and stimulating insights into the schools. The exchange with the school

leaders from the other countries promotes our reflection on our own actions. This promotes personal development and strengthens the togetherness in Europe.

The principals became aware of similar challenges and solutions in the various countries, but also that in some ways issues they face are quite different. Several pointed out the importance of sharing experiences and being inspired to expand one's own perspective. Through input and practice, they learned about being open-minded and receptive to learning and change and felt they were better able to engage in reflective discussions about their own leadership with peers from different countries, which was important for their self-confidence, as it enhanced their decision-making skills. Furthermore, contemplation of their own PLCs was facilitated as a result of meeting and working with other European heads. Most of the school leaders needed time to develop their PPLC before they could implement a PLC for teachers.

Organisation and implementation of a PPLC

The evaluation notes show that the first transnational meeting was the first encounter many of the principals had with a PLC, as not all the participating countries had established the concept or practice of the PLC at that time. However, some of the participants articulated a good understanding of working with and in PLCs, but the data material on everyday school activities in their respective countries differs widely with regard to opportunities and forms of collaboration available. After the first transnational meeting, many reported that one develops a better understanding of PLCs after participating in discussions and reflecting on them; however, many reported a need for more input from experts.

The data material repeatedly mentioned the principals' strong interest in the structure and organisation of PLCs. Indeed, the evaluation notes contained multiple requests for more advice and tips on how to run a PLC group. How much time should be allocated, how often should meetings be held, how many professionals should participate, should notes be taken in special books, how should one lead the group: these are key questions to which many of the participants sought answers. At the second transnational meeting for HeadsUP, the principals received a better impression of how a PPLC can function, as they were presented with a structure for a PPLC meeting, which included viewing a film of a Swedish PPLC meeting that followed the structure; this segment of the program was highlighted as particularly instructive. One of the Swedish principals who used this structure for several years described it as follows:

> We meet every other week for about two hours. We start every meeting with a one minute 'whining'[2] – every member gets a minute to talk about something that bothers him/her. I keep track of time. Then I tell them about the day's meeting; I sum up the activities of the previous meeting and check up on everybody's homework, who is going to speak, if we have some input and I set the time. The presenter of the day speaks, and the group members ask questions. If there are many questions, I keep track of whose turn it is. Fifteen minutes before ending the meeting, I summarise the day's meeting, and everyone reflects for themselves.

[2] *Whining* in this context refers to complaining or whining – as the principal explains it, it is about setting aside some time for participants to get things off their chest, discarding possible negative feelings they are concerned with there and then, and then proceeding with the topic for the day's meeting.

The session gave the principals ideas about how to structure a PPLC meeting. This structure was adopted by many of the participating principals and used in their regional PPLCs.

Perception of the importance of PLC

The data reveal many statements suggesting that the principals' participation in a PPLC helped them to identify ways to improve the structure and organisation of a PLC with teachers in their own schools:

- 'Getting to know important issues about PLCs, meeting regularly, the need for a group leader, and so on'.
- 'Experiencing the differences between countries makes it easier to see the possibilities in my organisation'.
- 'Structuring is something I have to do myself; reading about it alone is not enough'.
- 'Model the PLC structure and promote it to teachers – be a part of it'.
- 'Learning about structure and coordinating'.

Data collected through the interviews show that PLCs were in different stages of development in the various countries, and the data material provided some of the reasons for this. The need for practical advice on how to establish and operate a PLC was expressed: several participants were looking for good ideas and wanted to hear about the experiences and perceptions others had in developing PLCs in their own countries. For many participants, the first meeting was also their first encounter with other school systems, and time was spent acquiring information and becoming acquainted with the other participants' contexts.

Data from the evaluation form administered at the end of the second transnational meeting indicate that, after ten months, most participants had established or become part of a PPLC group in their home country after attending the first transnational meeting. Some also stated they developed deeper insight into the teacher's workday through participation in a PLC, which probably is contingent on having the school principal involved in meetings with the teachers. It has also been noted that some see the PLC as an opportunity to initiate team collaboration among teachers. Below are statements that reflect the ideas classified under this category:

- 'Take advantage of theoretical knowledge and translate into practice'.
- 'Transform through shared experience'.
- 'Discussions in PLC make problems visible'.
- 'Working together brings good exchanges and could bring teamwork to schools'.
- 'See challenges you otherwise may not have noticed or would have understood differently'.
- 'The positive experience in the principals' PLC helps to convince and to motivate teachers and will make teachers more focused and reflective workers'.
- 'Opportunity to grow to be a better teacher, to share and to help'.

The final main question in the interview concerned whether it was possible to see improvements in the pupils' learning outcomes due to work in PLCs. Most of the participating principals were only in the beginning stages of establishing a PLC culture in their

respective countries. Lack of time for teacher participation in a PLC was identified as a weakness in a SWOT analysis of PLCs conducted across Germany, Cyprus, Austria and Spain; the principals in those countries did not have the same level of control over the teachers' time outside of their teaching hours as did their colleagues in Norway and Sweden. One principal stated: 'The biggest problem with our PLC for teachers is time because the staff works with the children three afternoons a week, and so we try to organise our PLC meetings at lunch time'. For these reasons, and because the data available is still too limited, it is too early to draw conclusions on the effect of PLCs on student learning. A Norwegian participant said in an interview that while the implementation of the PLC has been beneficial for participating teachers, as it has been very positive to have an arena for shared reflection among a smaller group of teachers, it is still too early to say whether the reflection had impacted student learning.

Discussion

The empirical findings show that many of the participants in HeadsUP believe they have developed their skills as leaders by joining the project, but what is even more important is that they feel they have developed a higher level of confidence and awareness in their leadership roles. They mention that discussions and debates with other principals, both during the transnational meetings and in their own regional PPLC networks, have given them confidence in their role as principal and that participation in HeadsUP has led to an increased level of self-confidence in personal decision-making. By far most of those who participated in the project have substantial experience as school leaders, so one may wonder why this project, in

particular, has apparently had so much influence on the self-confidence and self-awareness of these school principals. The answer to this question, in part, is found in the data, which tells us that established networks were not available to many of the participants prior to their joining a PPLC through the HeadsUP project. The empirical findings show that the availability of a network, a PPLC, with other school principals is perceived as a change that has positively contributed to their principalship, a change that has occurred quite quickly. This is aligned with previous research that views PPLCs as important to the development of principals' individual leadership skills and that underlines the need for principals to meet with peers and discuss both leadership and pedagogical issues (David, 2009; Gaudioso, 2018; Tupponce, 2018). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) asserted that professional learning communities consist of three core elements:

1) A community of teachers in a long-term relationship, 2) a learning community in which the driving force is commitment to improving the learning outcomes and welfare of pupils, and 3) professionalism, where collaboration-based decisions and improvements are inspired by knowledge and scientific findings.

Even if this description of a learning community is written with teachers in mind, it can, with minor adjustments, also define a PPLC. One may envision rewriting the core elements in this manner:

1) A community of school principals in long-term relationships, 2) a learning community in which the driving force is commitment to developing one's own leadership, thereby improving the learning outcomes and welfare of pupils and 3) professionalism, where collaboration-based decisions and improvements are inspired by knowledge and scientific findings.

Since, as the data shows, many of the principals had never before been in a professional community with other principals, it is easy to understand that they recognised the development potential in the HeadsUP project. In this context, we find an interesting additional perspective, offered by one of the German principals during an interview, that this project also strengthens the sense of European community – 'the togetherness in Europe'. He undoubtedly had a good point. However, could the same effect have been achieved without taking part in a transnational leader network? Could the same effect have been achieved in one's own country? The study shows that significant progress has been made through PPLC groups in the principals' own countries. However, the material also shows that participation in the transnational network adds what is perceived as a very important dimension. As noted, the contextual perspective is a theme that is frequently referred to in the data material. The principals say that it is interesting and useful to obtain insight into school systems in other countries, seeing both similarities and differences, because it enables them to view their own practices in a new light. They see fairly large contrasts between the transnational and domestic systems. Responsibilities are different, and the roles of the school principals are different, even when they are basically doing the same type of job, as one principal put it. This suggests that the contrasts experienced by meeting, discussing and socialising with leaders from other countries and school cultures led to another type of self-awareness and another type of reflection than one normally has at home. The empirical findings also show that the school visits, which are part of the HeadsUP meetings, also contribute to this effect.

Other aspects of leadership skill development were also identified in this study. One refers to having input from experts

during the transnational meetings, where various topics on the development of PLCs are presented. Another is the idea that one should reflect together with other leaders, which is a core element of the PLC, according to Stoll et al. (2006), who claimed that professional learning communities are basically focused on developing a constructive collaboration culture. To enhance this, principals need sufficient time to meet, and the need for strong facilitators must also be considered if the participants are to move from sharing experiences to inquiring into readings and instructional issues with high-level conversations (David, 2009). Also, Earl and Timperley (2008) emphasised the quality of the cooperation as important for the outcome and observed that not all cooperation is necessarily of high quality. This is a major challenge to conducting effective PLCs, both for school principals and for teachers. How can good quality cooperation be secured so that it leads to development? DuFour and Reeves (2016) criticised that many schools in various regions of the world seem to have what we can call a light version of PLCs, or what they called a 'PLC Lite'. Perhaps the school leaders are just putting a new name on existing collaborative processes or meetings. If so, have they really taken the basic principles of a PLC to heart? In line with this, Levine (2008) distinguishes between 'teachers' professional communities' and 'professional learning communities (PLCs)', where the former exists in all schools and may be useful for understanding why change comes about more easily in some schools than in others. PLCs, on the other hand, are associated with positive changes and with the fact that, by definition, their aim is to improve pupils' learning outcomes. The organisation's culture must be developed over time to achieve a well-functioning PLC, and PLCs cannot be treated simply as the latest 'in trend' in education if they are to succeed. Irgens' (2007) understanding of the structure of an

organisation's culture is that, to affect the culture, the fundamental values and assumptions of the staff must be changed. However, impact on the deeper structures in the culture, the norms and fundamental assumptions, also comes from the top down. This means that our actions and their results may influence norms and behavioural rules in the culture and even the fundamental attitudes of individuals. Establishing PLCs that undertake knowledge-based rather than simply experientially based reflection will undoubtedly represent a change in the culture in many schools. This means that a school leader must strive to influence the values and basic assumptions of teachers, for example, by persuading them to learn about and acknowledge the importance of new knowledge and research, and also change some actions, for example, the organisation of working hours and meetings for teachers and the reading of relevant literature, which, in turn, may impact basic assumptions.

Many experienced school leaders use a diversity of perspectives and skills in the performance of their jobs (Wennes & Irgens, 2015). Based on the information in the data material, there is reason to be optimistic, seeing that the school principals who participated in HeadsUP are getting support for the establishment of good PLCs in their own schools. The knowledge and experience the principals gained through the project will help them to build their competence with the PLC concept. Timperley et al. (2007) underlined that external expertise may contribute to creating a more challenging dialogue when the teachers are to discuss teaching and learning because the outsider can lead them to ask other questions and add other knowledge to the discussions, thus challenging the underlying assumptions of the discussion. Transferred to this study, one can envision that the different contexts of these principals may contribute in this way by presenting a broader perspective in the discussions.

The empirical findings also show that the participants in HeadsUP are highly motivated to work with PLCs in their own countries. The importance of learning how a PLC can function is highlighted, and this creates motivation. Another finding is that the 'double-decker' model of the HeadsUP project works as intended. It was noted repeatedly in the data material that the principals see the learning and transfer value for their own school that can be gained from participating in a PPLC. Busch (2011) is interested in the significance of identification, common language, sense of belonging and values. With this understanding, participation in a PLC with other principals can be seen as having great importance (Gaudioso, 2017; Tupponce, 2018). School principals may experience reinforcement of their identity as school leaders, and through the meetings held as part of the HeadsUP project and participation in a PPLC, they may feel inspired to establish a PLC for their own teachers. The principals' need for knowledge about how to structure and organise a team that can become a PLC was reflected in key questions for which many participants sought answers – how much time should be allocated, how often should meetings be held, how many should participate, should notes be taken in special books, and how one should lead the group. They also inquired as to how to focus on communication skills and how to transform a community to a PLC that enhances professional development. Furthermore, they observed the added value of bringing in different perspectives – as transnational colleagues can do. Perhaps this is the case, if we take the principles of DuFour and Reeves (2016) relating to a 'genuine' PLC into consideration. This study indicates that it takes time and significant support to fully realise the potential of what a PLC is and might be, and as the study of Fink and Resnick (2001) highlighted,

heads of schools need time in order to learn about and discuss teaching.

The contextual differences between countries that we see in the data material must signify that, for some of the participants, the introduction of a PLC will represent a paradigm shift for the majority of teachers at their school. One of the findings in this study is that the context within which the school principals run their schools differs considerably from one country to the next. Some of the principals from Spain, Austria and Cyprus stated that they had neither the means nor the authority to order teachers to collaborate due to work hour agreements, culture and tradition. With school leaders who may have adopted new perspectives through participation in HeadsUP, change is more than likely taking place. For others, change will be incremental rather than radical, which generally means refinement of existing structures and solutions. The Swedish and Norwegian school principals stated, for example, that they have the options and resources to further develop a collaborative culture that already exists among the teachers. Bolman and Deal (2014) indicated, however, that change may undermine the existing structural order, so there is a lack of clarity that may lead to distrust and confusion. The establishment of a PLC can be a strategy used to satisfy the initial goal of having teachers collaborate on planning, implementation and assessment of their teaching, which, in turn, leads to the pupils learning more and better (Helstad, 2015; Stoll et al., 2006b; Timperley et al., 2007). One could also argue that organising PLCs may be an operative goal in itself, as Hatch (2011) suggested, and sometimes the goals are established according to a well-developed strategy. There is no disagreement that the goal in school is that the pupils learn and develop. If these changes can be introduced as interactive learning

(Klev & Levin, 2009), there is good reason to believe that these pitfalls can be avoided.

Implications

To succeed as a school leader, it is fundamental to continuously develop leadership skills. Our study underlines the importance for principals to meet peers in order to enhance their professional development as leaders. It also shows that facilitation and support by external experts may be needed in the beginning to create a structure and strengthen the outcome of a PPLC. We argue that principal meetings are often a neglected and forgotten arena for learning, and that local authorities should reinstate or restructure these meetings so that principals can focus on teaching and discuss teaching with their peers.

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R E A L

How School Leaders Can Gain Role Clarity and Grow Their Leadership Identity?

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Abstract

Over the past decades, principals have experienced an increased pressure emanating from the responsibility for managing change and building organisations, whilst striving to improve students' learning outcomes (Abrahamsen, Aas, & Hellekjær, 2015; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Leadership learning programmes appear to emphasise the requirements of the job rather than leaders' individual capabilities, moral purpose and the need to take an active role in learning (McKinsey & Company, 2010). In the design of programmes, there seems to be a challenge in finding the balance between system and reform needs and school and individual needs. Despite these challenges, there is consensus in the literature that principals and school leaders need to comprehend the macro-contextual and micro-contextual influences on their work, as well as to develop knowledge and skills to understand their schools and leadership roles (Aas & Paulsen, 2019; Fullan, 2011). A fundamental but often forgotten perspective in leadership learning programmes is how to facilitate learning

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processes and help school leaders to gain role clarity and grow leadership identity. In this paper, we examine and discuss the way that newly appointed school leaders in Norway participating in a leadership learning programme can gain role clarity through investigation into role expectations and group coaching. We provide findings that shed light on aspects of how school leaders develop role clarity through taking an active role in learning within their workplaces and together with the school leaders participating in the leadership learning programme.

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Introduction

The major approaches employed by governments to ensure ongoing educational reforms are identified as old public administration (OPA), new public management (NPM) and organisational learning (OL; Olsen, 2002). Discrepancies within and between these approaches create their own pressures on schools and their leaders. Anxiety comes from the fact that the cumulative demands, fragmentation and incoherence could undermine the capacity of schools (Mulford, 2003). Whilst arguing that NPM has emerged as the dominant approach in educational governance, recent research has suggested that a closer examination should be made of OL. Under the influence of NPM, the restructuring of public schooling has been characterised by elements that all have in common a strong dependence on effective school leadership through school self-management, the expansion of the powers of school principals and increasing pressure for outcomes-based assessment (Dempster, 2002a).

In order to meet the multiple expectations placed on education, as well as to have engaged teachers, it is argued that schools need to become learning organisations. Within schools that are learning organisations, new types of relationship evolve between students, teachers and leaders, based around a trusting and collaborative climate, a shared and monitored mission and ongoing, relevant professional development (Leithwood, Leonard, & Sharratt, 1998; Silins, Mulford, & Zarins, 2002). School leaders can be a major influence on school-level factors and on the management of conflicting external pressures. A skilled and well-supported school leader can help promote a sense of ownership and purpose in terms of the way that teachers approach their job (Louis & Leithwood, 1998). One of the most significant findings from studies of effective school leadership is that the authority to lead need not be located in a single leader, but can be dispersed within the school and shared between and among people, i.e. a distributed perspective (Gronn, 2009; Spillane, Parise, & Sherer, 2011). According to Mulford & Silins (2003), the real challenge for schools is no longer how to improve but how to sustain improvement. Then, sustainability will depend upon the school's internal capacity to maintain and support developmental work, and supporting improvement requires the leadership capability of many rather than a few. Despite the strong link between OL and distributive leadership, the principal is still the formal leader in schools and plays a significant leadership role when it comes to focusing on individual staff support, promoting an atmosphere of caring and trust among staff, establishing a school structure that promotes participative decision-making, working toward whole-staff consensus on school priorities, having high expectations for students and for teachers in terms of being effective and innovative and encouraging staff to reflect on what they are trying to achieve with

students and how they are doing it (Mulford & Silins, 2003; Robinson, 2010).

In the current literature on the continuing professional development of school leaders, three broad conceptualisations are identifiable (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Lieberman, 1998). These are knowledge *for*, *in* and *of* practice. One perspective reflects leaders who have the role of implementers of knowledge that is generated by experts and formulated by policymakers, which they bring back to their schools and put into practice. In response to this point of view, there is acknowledgement of leaders' skills and knowledge about how new ideas can be transformed in the specific school culture. A third way takes issue with both these perspectives and suggests that professional learning is context specific and that leadership knowledge is both local and public at the same time (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2002).

Dempster (2002a) argues that principals' professional development can be described as a balance between learning what the system requires of individual leaders and what practising professionals require from themselves and their colleagues. A combination of system reconstruction and a focus on people results in a professional transformation orientation, which includes constructive social, system and organisational critiques, questions taken-for-granted understandings and analyses, reshapes personal and collective professional knowledge and reconstructs schooling and school leadership in alternative ways (Dempster, 2002b).

In a comparative document analysis of principal learning programmes in Sweden and Norway, the two Nordic countries with national leadership programmes for already active school leaders, the findings suggest that both programmes reflect international research,

and in addition, balancing democratic participation with managerial decision-making is characterised as making up the Nordic profile (Aas & Törnsen, 2016). The Nordic school leadership profile involves performing leadership within long-established democratic societies, which build on equal and collaborative relationships between leaders and staff and doing this in parallel to meeting system level accountability demands. In practice, this implies balancing the democratic idea of involvement and exerting influence with the necessary decision-making. Aas and Törnsén (2016) suggest that the challenge for school leaders of handling the 'balancing act' calls for providers of leadership learning programmes to supplement system needs with a focus on individual needs beyond formal roles. Strengthening individuals to carry out the multifold and, at times, competing demands, appeals for self-awareness not only in the leadership role but also as a human being. In alignment with the argument from Dempster (2002b), this implies gaining role clarity: learning what the system requires of individual leaders and what practising professionals require from themselves and their colleagues. Role clarity refers as such to the sufficiency of information regarding the expectations associated with one's role within the organisation (Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2011). For leaders new to their positions, obviously, the acquisition of role knowledge is important, but it is also very demanding, particularly when the role is complex or when the organisational context is very dynamic (Van Wart, 2011), which is the case for school leaders. Developing critical thinking skills and the knowledge, ability, strength and courage to understand and balance aspects of hard control with the values of care and trust will be central to leadership learning and role clarity among school leaders. As a consequence, communication skills, the importance of personal involvement, emotional engagement and knowledge about how to

build trust need to be part of professional leadership development and role clarity (Aas, 2017). Understanding the role is a necessary step in growing one's own leadership identity (Aas & Vavik, 2015) and encompasses the process by which individuals come to be seen (by themselves and by others) as leaders (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

A *fundamental but often forgotten perspective* in *leadership learning programmes* is, however, how to facilitate learning processes in terms of helping school leaders to gain role clarity and grow their leadership identity. With this background, we pose our main research questions: *How can newly appointed school leaders participating in a leadership learning programme gain role clarity through group coaching?* Two sub-questions are generated: *1) Which coaching topics have the school leaders prepared to be coached on, and how are these expressed by the leaders? How are the coaching topics developed through the group coaching, and what characterises their development?* Empirically, the study is grounded in a Principal Learning Programme in Norway, situated at a university for newly appointed school leaders (Hybertsen et al., 2014). The study sheds light on and discusses *fundamental* aspects of how school leaders can understand and gain role clarity through participating in the programme with integrated group coaching sessions, and it contributes to knowledge on how role clarity might be helpful in growing their leadership identity.

First, we give a literature overview of coaching and group coaching in professional leadership learning. Then, we explain the context of the study, the Principal Learning Programme, and the group coaching methodology utilised in the programme. Further, we outline the methodological approach before presenting the research findings, which are briefly summarised before moving on to the

discussion. Finally, we conclude the study and point out a direction for future work.

Coaching in Professional Leadership Learning

In recent times, coaching has gained a position as one of the tools used in leadership development programmes for school leaders (Bush, 2009). Studies reporting on the benefits of coaching used for professional development (Silver, Lochmiller, Copland, & Tripps, 2009) and for developing leadership performance (Goff, Guthrie, Goldring, & Bickman, 2014; Huff, Preston, & Goldring, 2013) are growing. Mostly, coaching is seen as offering support to school leaders in terms of putting issues and concerns into perspective, increasing their efficiency and helping them become innovative (Mavrogordato & Cannon, 2009). The knowledge produced through coaching is considered socially constructed and negotiated to the point that the status quo is explicitly questioned (Crow, 2012). When this approach is linked to professional learning for school leaders, there is the prospect of transformational leadership that encourages proactivity, even that which challenges the status quo and systemic issues (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Tolhurst (2010) suggests that coaching can be beneficial to individuals as well as the organisation as a whole. Benefits for individuals include increased levels of personal confidence, competence and personal agency. Organisational benefits of coaching include increased staff capability in responding to new roles or tasks and improvements to the organisation's practice.

Coaching provides a way to ensure that learning has direct relevance and meaning to a leader's work setting by helping leaders address issues and concerns regarding practice and make meaningful changes in their daily lives (Heck & Hallinger, 2014). This link with

the real world of praxis is also emphasised by Kolb (1984), Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) and Robertson (2008). Hunzicker (2011) suggests that adults as learners are motivated by solving problems that relate directly to their lives and by creating enduring solutions.

Most coaching approaches are dyadic (one to one); recently, group coaching has become another variant. Whilst coaching is a collaborative approach between the coach and the coachee, group coaching also includes co-coaches. The difference is that a learning community comprised of school leaders representing a variety of school cultures and contexts is formed (Flückiger, Aas, Johnson, Lovett, & Nicolaidou, 2017). As a result, group coaching provides a unique scenario for different collegial voices to support the development of school leaders' social and cultural competences (Britton, 2010; Thornton, 2010). Further, others such as Lee (2007), claim that collaborative engagement with a range of leaders from diverse contexts increases professional interaction, provides opportunities for school leaders to consider new ways of working as leaders of organisations (Passmore, 2009) and promotes awareness of how leadership can be performed differently in different school cultures (Aas & Vavik, 2015). In accordance with the principle that links professional learning to practice, Robertson (2016) argues that any collaborative engagement must be structured to facilitate double-loop and triple-loop learning and reflection *on* action, *in* action and *for* action. Double-loop learning refers to new ways of thinking and acting regarding issues (Argyris & Schön, 1978), and triple-loop learning involves the consideration of the organisational context, as well as a dramatic shift in perspective (reframing) and behaviour (redesigning; Hargrove, 2008).

Group coaching draws on a variety of theories and approaches spread across academic and professional fields (Aas & Fluckiger, 2016). As recognised by Rhodes and Fletcher (2013), coaching processes in education have their origins in business organisational contexts typified most recently in adaptations of the GROW model – goal setting, reality check, options available and wrap up – produced by Whitmore (2004). Brown and Grant (2010) developed the GROUP model – goal, reality, options, understanding others and perform – which takes into account that understanding others is a key factor in successful group coaching. The GROUP model follows the same initial phases as the GROW model, with the difference being that in the *understanding others* phase the focus is on how group dialogue provides opportunities for deep collaborative learning.

The facilitation of group processes has long been part of the repertoire of practices within organisational learning and development. A distinction should be made between the facilitation of group processes and group coaching. Group coaching is more goal focused than the process orientation of group facilitation, and the roles of the coach and the facilitator are slightly different. In group coaching, the coach focuses on the content that is being discussed within the group as well as the facilitation of the group coaching process (Aas & Fluckiger, 2016). An effective facilitation of group coaching includes four areas of facilitation: preparation of the group coaching sessions; introduction of the sessions; management of the group interaction; and summarising and synthesising the emerging ideas and actions (Rothwell, Herbert, & Rothwell, 2008). Whilst conducting this dual role, the facilitator is detached, focused on the team process, whereas the coach is engaged in the dialogue (Brown & Grant, 2010; Clutterbuck, 2007).

The participants in group coaching sessions acknowledge the importance of the other participants' efforts to provide positive support. This illustrates how the group coaching format can increase empathy through communicating with interpersonal sensitivity. Verbal encouragement from others can help the participants to achieve new goals and show them that they have the abilities to succeed (Aas & Fluckiger, 2016; Aas & Vavik, 2015). The group setting allows the participants to influence one another and to collaborate and cooperate, thereby developing social competence. Relational responses and emotional reactions play an important role in the coaching environment (Brandmo, Aas, Colbjørnsen & Olsen, 2019). Due to the social aspects, mastering the coaching situation itself represents a learning opportunity. Moreover, professional competencies can be developed through giving and seeking authentic feedback from others and incorporating the group coaching methodologies into their own leadership settings (Flückiger et al., 2017).

The Principal Learning Programme

Norwegian authorities, influenced by the OECD project, 'Improving School Leadership' (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008), launched a nationwide education programme in 2009 for newly appointed principals; here, the goal was to improve their qualifications as leaders and to support national policies. The National Principal Learning Programme was built around five curriculum themes that the Norwegian Minister of Education and Research tendered for: students' learning, management and administration, cooperation and organisation building, development and change and the leadership role (Hybertsen et al., 2014). Seven universities offer the programme on behalf of the Norwegian

Directorate for Education and Training. According to Huber (2011), one of the fundamental principles of professional leadership learning is using multiple learning strategies. A process of ongoing reflection and discussion that challenges the current way of thinking is valuable in building new practices. In the Principal Learning Programme (hereafter called PLP) offered at our university, group coaching is integrated, aiming at promoting reflection on personal agency, including developing role clarity, self-efficacy and ethical considerations (Aas, 2016; As & Vavik, 2015), which can lead to changes in leadership practices. School leaders attending the programme, not necessarily principals yet, are often still in the early phases of their school leader careers, hence their lack of understanding of the school leadership role and of developing their identity as a leader. Most often they have several years of experience as teachers, and thus many have challenges with the transformation process, from their role as a teacher into their role as a school leader. In the following section, we outline the group coaching methodology utilised in the programme.

The Group Coaching Methodology

In the PLP, coaching is delivered to groups of six students. Each coaching group has its own dedicated coach who follows it throughout the programme. The group coaches have participated in a joint training programme led by a leading external coaching expert. All the students participate in the coaching sessions by asking questions, sharing reflections and offering advice. Three full days of the twenty-day programme are devoted to coaching, which mean that the three coaching sessions are integrated into the programme. A specific group methodology is developed for the coaching process (Aas, 2016). One participant at a time serves as the group's focus,

whilst the other members are active participants. The structure of the coaching session is similar for each of the six students.

In advance of a session, the students perform preparatory work (for example, a 360-degree interview) that helps them to formulate a leadership topic to be coached on and to prepare for the session. The session begins with a short introduction, where the participant in focus (the coachee) addresses his or her leadership topic, which most often reflects a leadership challenge to come to grips with. Next, the coach and the other members of the group are allowed to ask clarifying questions. In this phase, a reframing and concretisation of the presented topic might emerge in parallel, and the objective of the coaching is framed through help from the coach. After that, the group members and the coach start a conversation about what they have heard, their understanding of the leadership topic presented and what sorts of reflections they have, and then they are supposed to give advice that can motivate and promote the future growth of the coachee. During this phase of the session, the coachee is sitting with his or her back to the group, concentrating on only listening, not preparing answers. Finally, the coachee faces the group and comments on the reflections of and advice from the co-coaches and elaborates on ways that he or she might handle the challenge in the future. This methodology is also piloted in the project Professional Learning through Feedback and Reflection (PROFLEC) that involved 10 countries and was led by Professor Dr Stephan Huber from the University of Teacher Education Switzerland, with funding support from the European Commission (Flückiger et al., 2017).

The students' preparatory work for the first coaching session is to map expectations in terms of their leadership roles and performance. By using 360-degree interviews, each student is asked

to interview different people in their organisation to learn what their colleagues expect from them as leaders. Based on their interpretations of the interview data, the students write a report that compiles expectations and point out one to three leadership challenges that they can frame as topics to be coached on and address when in the spotlight for coaching.

The group coaching provides opportunities for sharing experiences with others who have similar leadership challenges. The information from the 360-degree interviews represents a ‘mirror’ or a reflection repertoire for understanding how the leaders ‘fit’ their jobs (Caldwell & O’Reilly, 1990). Listening to others’ experiences during the coaching session provides the participants with information on how their leadership roles could be performed differently. Exposure to the daily life stories of leaders from different schools develops, what Passmore (2009) calls, cultural competence, which includes the ability to respond openly to others’ ideas and values and a willingness to question personal assumptions and the assumptions of others. The role of the coaches is to support participants in framing the objective of the coaching session with a view to improving their personal competencies as leaders in their school contexts (Brown & Grant, 2010). Action planning (Hunzicker, 2011) involves the design of a plan that will lead to the achievement of the aforementioned objective. During this stage, the coaches provide support to the participants in designing their action plans. Ongoing monitoring and support provide encouragement and motivation to keep the participants on track (Huff et al., 2013; Mavrogordato & Cannon, 2009).

Methodology

This study utilises a qualitative research strategy (Cresswell, 2002) in order to examine the phenomenon of how newly appointed school leaders can gain role clarity and develop their leadership skills. A collective case study design (Stake, 2005) is used to investigate the development of role clarity and leadership identity in the cases of 60 school leaders participating in the Principal Learning Programme in 2018-2019. The data consist of 60 school leaders' reports, in which they, as preparation for the first group coaching sessions in January 2019, had each identified and specified a coaching topic based on the 360-degree interviews conducted in November 2018. In addition, the data consist of a document from each of the 10 coaching groups (10 groups with 6 school leaders in each group), 10 documents in sum. These documents were written by the groups' coaches and documented the coaching topic of each school leader in the group as it developed and was agreed upon as an objective and guideline for their coaching.

Through the analytical work, we aimed at bringing together findings from the 60 cases via the following strategy: (1) within analysis and (2) cross-case analysis. First, the coaching topics as formulated in the reports were analysed and then coded, case by case. The codes represented key leadership role challenges. In each case, we used open coding, inspired by the constant comparative method of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). We then grouped the codes in order to identify the broad topics that existed across the 60 cases. The analysis led to the definition of five categories into which the challenges could be sorted:

1) Being clear
2) Leading meetings
3) Conducting difficult conversations
4) Prioritising and delegating
5) Handling resistance

This information was used to inform further interpretation and conduct a detailed analysis of the 10 documents by applying the same strategy. First, the developed coaching topics, as formulated for each case within each of the five categories, were analysed and coded case by case. The codes represented *aspects* of how the coaching topic developed. We then grouped the codes in order to identify the broad aspects that existed across the 60 cases. The analysis led to the definition of three categories into which the aspects could be sorted:

6) Deepening knowledge of leadership challenges
7) Connecting leadership challenges to contexts
8) Orienting toward goal-driven improvement through acting

Although great caution must be exercised when making generalisations in relation to such a small sample of school leaders, we follow Stake's (1995) call for the use of naturalistic generalisation. Here, readers are left to generalise for themselves, based on conclusions arrived at through their personal engagement in life, or via vicarious experience that is so well constructed that one feels as if it has happened to oneself.

Findings

The presentation of the findings is organised under the five identified coaching topics as identified through the analysis: *being clear, leading meetings, conducting difficult conversations, prioritising and delegating* and *handling resistance*. How the coaching topics developed

through the group coaching and what characterised their development are exemplified by the use of relevant excerpts from the data, showing the *aspects* revealed in the analysis. The excerpts refer to the school leaders (from 1–60; 60 cases in total).

Being Clear

Being clear is the leadership challenge that most of the school leaders identified as wanting to be coached on (14 of 60). How the school leaders actually interpreted and understood the concept of being clear based on the interview data is more explicitly expressed in the coaching topic as it emerged in the first phase of the coaching session. The findings show that conducting clear leadership revolves around inspiring, supporting, motivating, clarifying expectations, holding accountable, being courageous and having the willingness and ability to take action, involving, delegating tasks and being democratic. For example, a principal from an upper secondary school emphasised how important it is to make the informal leaders among the staff become supportive instead of acting as opponents regarding school development work. He posed the question: "How can one manage to be clear and express obvious expectations, which must be complied with, without being considered to be too governing and authoritarian?" A deputy principal reported that the dominant feedback from the 360-degree investigation was that she needs to be clearer, and after the process in the coaching group, she formulated her topic to be coached on: "How to communicate more clearly regarding challenging tasks and processes facing me as a leader of school development. I experience a dilemma between expressing clear expectations and, at the same time, taking on my role as a coach and motivating the teachers to find their own ways". Yet, a deputy principal from an elementary school problematised how to appear

diplomatic and, at the same time, act as a confident, clear, and courageous leader. She also included the importance of prioritising tasks and leading in a democratic manner. Likewise, another department head framed a theme around developing the competence "to lead those who in my department do not want to be led, and having the courage to express what I mean, and stand by my decisions although they represent the contrary to teachers' wishes". Some also mentioned clarity in relation to leading meetings, in addition to other aspects regarding this task.

Leading Meetings

Leading meetings was a frequently repeated concept in the school leaders' reports and in their identification and framing of coaching topics. During the coaching, it became evident that to lead in a structured way, to develop a professional community, to listen actively and to ensure that a wide range of standpoints are expressed ahead of solutions being made were challenges related to leading meetings. Moreover, it became evident that this task also included handling resistance and critique. "It may be a balance between trust and control", a department head at a secondary school, uttered. In a similar manner, yet another department head at an elementary school realised: "My authority under some circumstances is useful, whilst in others it is less purposeful". More explicitly, he pointed out the great potential when it comes to decision-making, but, at the same time, he realised that there is a limitation when it comes to communicating with the teachers in plenary meetings, such as when leading them. The main challenge seems to be to obtain the best insights ahead of a decision in order to succeed with the development work at the school. A principal at an adult education centre saw the challenge as keeping the focus on professional development, and the construction

of his topic ended more explicitly: "How to handle resistance and critical voices in meetings in school development work." Likewise, another head of department in a secondary school emphasised that he needs to develop routines and techniques to get the most out of a conversation.

Conducting Difficult Conversations

Dealing with difficult conversations, as a challenge and a skill that the school leaders want to develop, was frequently brought up in the school leaders' reports and in their identification and framing of the coaching topics. A difficult conversation may be one that you dread having, and which contains the potential for conflict. In fact, a difficult conversation often occurs together with a lack of clarity, which has already been explored above. For example, as an elementary school principal explained: "I want to get coached on my ability to be explicit and clear in my communication with the employees, even though there is a risk that he or she may be hurt or feel criticised". The principal expanded further: "I need to be challenged in terms of how to take on the voice of a leader, especially in individual conversations with the employees". A deputy head teacher from an upper secondary school expanded on mentioning the challenge of having difficult conversations to implementing and enduring such conversations. Likewise, questions were raised by a principal from a secondary school: "How should I handle a difficult colleague? And how should I deal with and correct unwanted behaviour without insulting and creating barriers to further cooperation?". A deputy head from a private school also wanted to be coached on the conversation as the point of departure, further expanding it in terms of avoiding labelling people and speaking too strong or quick to respond, "learn to answer that I need more time to

think before answering". She added that she needs to be better at setting limits for herself. The last example has something in common with several of the other examples from this chapter: the leaders' immanent need to prioritise.

Prioritising and Delegation

Prioritising and delegation are closely connected. Prioritising what tasks can be delegated may be an important skill for a school leader, in order to create more time to plan and conduct leadership. In sum, the school leaders emphasised the potential of delegating so as to be in a position to be increasingly close and more hands-on regarding the development work in the schools, alongside prioritising to increase their influence and ensure higher accountability among staff. A principal of an elementary school emphasised the need to develop the ability to delegate and to let go of some of the perceived need for control as the primary goal for his coaching time. In addition, a deputy principal at an upper secondary school referred to stress and a guilty conscience. Others also reported the same problems. A department head at a secondary school "needs help to prioritise different tasks in order to have more time to plan various strategic projects". Yet another points at "priority skills", and "increasing the capability to say no". A head of department at an upper secondary school emphasised: "The situation now is that I am very frequently at the office working, even during weekends. I am struggling with prioritising tasks". The head wanted to be coached on prioritising tasks without having a guilty conscience, emphasising the need to prioritise all the different tasks. Further, the head added: "This challenge coincides with another challenge that became clear to me during conducting the 360-degree interviews: the preoccupation with being liked by my teachers". By having the courage to prioritise

differently, some of them may experience less facilitation from me, which in turn may make some of them dissatisfied. The last section deals with handling resistance.

Handling Resistance

Resistance may be both a healthy force for positive change and progress and also a negative force for development. The school leaders emphasised the need to strengthen their ability to motivate for change and to lead their schools' development work in order to contribute to obtaining high achievement for the students. In short, this involves leading the teachers' learning and, at the same time, responding constructively to their resistance to and hesitation regarding change. For example, as one head of department in an upper secondary school illustrated, reflecting on questions like "How can I deal with those who express scepticism in a constructive way?" and "How can I avoid defending my own convictions even before I have described the details … and also challenge those who express resistance and are reluctant?" The head was also convinced that choosing this focus is important, not only with regard to the teachers, but also to the leadership group at school. "It is a crucial success factor that all members in the leadership group participate and engage in". In a similar manner, another head of department was also preoccupied with resistance from teachers, and what she considers to be "unpleasant". She pointed out the need to "develop robustness as a leader in order to persist and develop to become a better pedagogical leader than I am today". A head of department at an elementary school indicated the need to develop courage as a leader, expressing a wish to avoid risk and take a safe position when decisions are to be taken. An assistant school leader in an elementary school emphasised the importance of receiving "constructive

criticism", without being negatively affected by it, and of being able to see the difference between the case and the person. Or, in other words, she emphasised the importance of not letting personal or individual circumstances overshadow the crucial aspects that are involved in the case itself.

Summary of the Findings

In sum, the findings show that the school leaders prepared and addressed coaching topics, derived from the leadership mirror (360-degree), and their interpretations of their colleagues' feedback and expectations included a great variety of perceptions and role expectations. At this stage, the topics represented general leadership challenges most often formulated as questions, expressed as ideas in terms of concepts, like being clear, leading meetings, conducting difficult conversations, prioritising and delegation and handling resistance. However, what remained largely unconsidered at this stage was what the school leaders' understanding of the meanings of the concepts actually was. As the school leaders' coaching topics developed through the processes of collective co-construction and sensemaking between the co-coaches and the coachee and the facilitation from the group coach, general ideas transformed into deeper and more concrete terms linked to the environmental settings and to the goals of improvements and actions. For example, communication occurred in both directions, embedded in the coaching topics, as exemplified in this excerpt: "… how to communicate more clearly in the challenging tasks and processes facing me as a leader of *school development*. I experience a dilemma between expressing clear expectations and, at the same time, taking on the role as a coach and motivating the teachers to find their own ways". These developments had the potential for gaining role clarity

by the means that priorities could be established, and training needs identified.

Discussion

Based on the summary of the findings, we raise three aspects for further discussion related to what characterises the developments of the coaching topics through which role clarity could be gained. First, we discuss the aspect of deepening the knowledge and the concretisation of leadership challenges, then the aspect of connecting leadership challenges to context and, lastly, the aspect of orienting toward goal-driven development through acting.

Role clarity: Deepening knowledge and concretisation

By using 360-degree interviews, the participants get a clearer picture of how they are perceived as leaders or 'fit' their jobs (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990) through feedback from actors in the school. This preparation work helps the participants to formulate their coaching topics and prepare for the group coaching sessions. The analysis shows that the participants' coaching topics, typically, are foremost expressed as general ideas. As the coach and the other members of the group start asking clarifying questions regarding the coaching topic, a deeper knowledge and a concretisation of the presented topic emerge and become the guidelines for what they will be coached on. The collaborative engagement is structured to facilitate reflection *on* action, *in* action and *for* action (Robertson, 2013) in order to support the transformation of general ideas into concepts that are embedded in the ideas. For example, the concepts of expressing clear expectations, communicating one's own opinions more clearly, holding accountable and being democratic were actually embedded in the idea of *conducting clear leadership*. The

variety of expectations reflects the ambiguity and complexity of the school leadership role that evolves from the focus on learning organisations based around a trusting and collaborative climate (Leithwood et al., 1998; Silins et al., 2002). The co-coaches' and the coach's verbal encouragement and efforts to provide positive support through structured enquiry can help the participants to see and formulate what needs to be changed to make a difference, help them to prioritise and show them that they have the abilities to succeed (cf. Aas & Fluckiger, 2016; Aas & Vavik, 2015).

Role clarity: Connecting leadership challenges to contexts

The participants experience a great variety of perceptions and role expectations that to some extent are tension laden. They describe tensions between the perceptions and expectations of the superintendent (focusing on loyalty to the steering signals and the budget) and of the teachers (focusing on the pedagogy and their students' learning). Next, they underline relational and emotional aspects between the principals and the teachers as a main issue. From a systemic perspective, these findings align with what Fullan (2011) argues, in that the principals are expected to be the actors between the school staff and the local district administration, meeting and resolving expectations of the levels above and below them.

Further, our study shows how the school leaders use of the feedback from their colleagues as data and the first stage of the coaching sessions help them to understand how different expectations could be linked to and seen as aspects of their environmental context. For example, this is the case when it comes to providing individual support to the staff, promoting an atmosphere of caring and trust among staff and establishing a school structure that promotes participative decision-making (Mulford & Silins, 2003;

Robinson, 2010). According to Dempster (2002b), these competing demands appeal for knowledge and critical thinking and strength and courage to balance aspects of hard control with the values of care and trust, a process which is facilitated during the coaching session. These competing demands might be one explanation of why many of the school leaders address the development of communication skills as their main leadership challenge and as their topic to be coached on as a part of their development as professionals and role clarity (cf. Aas, 2017).

Role clarity: Orienting toward object-driven development through acting

Researchers have considered that coaches help leaders to address issues and concerns regarding practice that can make meaningful changes in their daily lives during the process of formulating and reformulating the object of change (Heck & Hallinger, 2014). The analysis shows that all the school leaders addressed leadership issues and concerns relating to their work settings as topics to be coached on. The co-coaches' capacity to pose relevant investigative and clarifying questions regarding the topic being addressed shows the subjects' relevance and meaning to their work settings, at least with regard to supporting the creation of the object of change. It is evident that this kind of support is not only about engagement with a range of school leaders, providing opportunities for school leaders to consider new ways of working (Passmore, 2009), but rather, it is about collective structured co-construction oriented toward constructing objects that may function as guidelines and motives for what to change and how to act to develop and make differences in schools. This may work as a kind of engagement and support that may provide encouragement and

motivation for outlining an action plan that is possible to implement in their own schools (Huff et al., 2013; Mavrogordato & Cannon, 2009). The variety of leadership challenges and objects of change that characterise the coaching topics developed demonstrate how leadership can be performed differently in different school cultures (Aas & Vavik, 2015), but, at the same time, the challenges reflect the insecurity that newly appointed principals struggle with in understanding and developing their leadership roles, gaining role clarity and growing their leadership identity.

Conclusion

Multiple expectations placed on education, alongside the restructuring of public schooling under the influence of NPM, have increased the pressure on school leaders. When schools are seen as learning organisations, new types of relationship among the actors evolve. Based on this situation, we have argued that a *fundamental but often forgotten perspective* in *leadership learning programmes* is considering how to facilitate learning processes, helping school leaders to gain role clarity and grow their leadership identity. In this study, we have examined how group coaching can promote and help school leaders to understand and gain role clarity. The analysis demonstrates that group coaching can be one way of supporting the school leaders' role clarity process, underlining the effect of the collective learning that happens in a group of colleagues (Aas, 2015; Aas & Vavik, 2015; Flückiger et al., 2017). Insight gained through such group coaching sessions seems to be crucial for school leaders with regard to building capacity for understanding and constructing their leadership roles. One implication of the study is that providers of leadership learning programmes should focus on how the

programmes can contribute to helping the school leaders to understand and construct their leadership roles and grow their leadership identities. We also recognise the need for further research that can document and inform about the complexity and challenges involved in gaining school leadership role clarity. In that respect, interview data could be of great assistance in better capturing school leaders' perceptions and experiences of gaining role clarity through leadership learning programmes.

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Paternalistic School Principal Behaviours and Teachers' Participation in Decision Making: The Intermediary Role of Teachers' Trust in Principals

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Abstract

In this study, the effect of school principals' administrative mentality on teachers' participation in the decision-making process was analysed via the intermediary role of teachers' trust in principals. In this study, which utilised structural equation modelling (SEM) to analyse conceptual relationships, the sample consisted of 646 teachers who worked in various school types in the Çekmeköy district of Istanbul. In the findings, a positive correlation was found between benevolent and moral leadership (dimensions of paternalistic leadership behaviour), and trust in principals and teachers' participation in decision making. On the other hand, a negative and significant relationship was found between the authoritarian leadership dimension and trust in principals and teachers' participation. The results of the SEM analysis, in which the

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conceptual model was tested, indicated that the benevolent and moral leadership dimensions of paternalistic leadership could positively predict trust in the administrator and teachers' participation in decision making. As for authoritarian leadership, it negatively predicted teachers' participation in decision making, and trust in principals played a full intermediary role in this relationship. When these findings were synthesised, morality and benevolence were found to affect teachers' trust in principals and participation positively, while authoritarian leadership was found to have a negative effect.

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Introduction

Educational leadership is one of the issues that needs to be prioritised by policy makers (Harris et al., 2018). Historically, leadership was first based on innate charismatic characteristics. In later periods, in behaviourist leadership theories, the attitudes and behaviour of leaders towards their subordinates became a focus of interest. Recently, leadership has been explained according to the current circumstances, and the idea that circumstances affect leadership style was put forward (Koçel, 2014). On the other hand, the idea that managerial attitudes, values, and behaviours vary depending on national cultures brought forward the concept of different types of leadership (Hofstede, 1984; Fikret Pasa et al., 2001). According to Hofstede (1980; 2001) while leadership is a universal phenomenon that goes beyond national borders, styles and applications in relation to it vary with respect to culture. The concept

of paternalistic leadership, which emerged as a consequence of cultural differences, is a research field that is flourishing in management literature (Cheng et al., 2004). In the western management literature, paternalistic leadership is based on behaviourist theories. The studies of Ohio State University and Michigan University on behavioural leadership focused on leaders' understanding of workers' emotions and ideas, dealing with their problems, and having good relationships with them. As a matter of fact, in Rensis Likert's System-3 Model, some leaders were found to be benevolent autocrats who controlled subordinates and used a reward-punishment mechanism (Koçel, 2014). Traditional behaviourist theories emphasised that managers should be paternalistic in order to form working groups that have high motivation. However, Max Weber stated that as an indicator of traditional domination, submission to leadership is the result of status in paternalistic leadership. In general, paternalistic leadership attracts a negative attitude and it is labelled as "benevolent dictatorship" (Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008).

In comparison to the perception in the western literature, in the eastern idea of paternalistic leadership, leaders keep their discipline and authority while they keep their morality and benevolence at the same time (Hayek et al., 2010). The studies undertaken in non-western cultures such as Turkey, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, India, Japan, Taiwan and Mexico argue that in response to their managers' paternalistic leadership, workers react positively and want their managers to protect and care for them (Farh and Cheng, 2000; Cheng et al., 2004; Chen et al., 2014; Aycan, 2006; Niu et al., 2009; Wu et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2015; Uhl-Bien et al., 1990). In Hofstede's (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, 2011) study which was undertaken in 62 countries on business organisations, Turkish people

were found to be collectivist and they were observed to have a high-power distance. On the other hand, the study showed that avoiding uncertainty, orientations to performance and the future, and gender egalitarianism were low in Turkish society. This situation is a result of the fact that businesses are usually run by family members in Turkey. In these organisations, leadership is embodied in a person, decisions are centralised, and authority is shared only in a limited way. As a matter of fact, the studies undertaken in Turkey showed that a paternalistic leadership style has significant effects on workers' attitudes and behaviours. The reason given in these studies is that leaders expect their workers to obey them. As for the workers, they see their leader as a family man who cares for them in both their business and social life (Öner, 2012; Fikret Pasa et al., 2001; Erben and Güneşer, 2008; Aycan et al., 2000). Leadership in a collectivist culture tends to be paternalistic and supportive, whereas in an individualistic culture it tends to be achievement-oriented and participative (Slater, 2011). The current developments in the East and West indicate that there is a need for research into school principals' leadership styles in schools as educational organisations within a specific cultural context.

In leadership research in schools, Western leadership styles (e.g. instructional, transformational, distributed and transactional) have been discussed for a long time. These studies usually underline the positive aspects of leadership styles and mostly ignore the negative sides (Harris and Jones, 2018). Having a positive perspective, researchers focused on the leadership style school principals should have in order to increase students' success and the efficiency of schools (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1990; Hallinger, 2003; Griffith, 2004; Blase and Blase, 2000; Hallinger, 2005; Southworth, 2002; Silins, 1994; Nguni et al., 2006; Marks and Printy, 2003; Bush and Glover, 2014;

Hallinger and Bridges, 2017; Heck and Hallinger, 2014; Khalifa et al., 2016; Truong et al., 2016). However, in leadership style studies, the interaction style of a school as a society and school principals' personal choices vary with regard to cultural values. The fact that cultural values vary from country to country makes the aims and goals of schools special and personalised (Wang and Wei, 2007).

Educational policies are determined by the central government in the Turkish Education System. The objectives of the central government on education seem to be reflected in the training programs. The issue of school administration is one of the most important problems of the Turkish education system. In this system, school principals are defined as persons who are responsible for fulfilling the duties and responsibilities determined by the central government. Since the 2000s, school principals have been considered as leaders who are at the centre of the teaching processes and who actively take part in the development of teachers and schools. However, due to the fact that school administration is not regarded as a profession in the Turkish Education System and that school principals do not possess the required knowledge and skills related to their duties, they do not have significant and effective attitudes towards their profession (Beycioglu, Kılınç, and Polatcan, 2019; Karabatak and Şengür, 2018; Karabatak, 2015; Recepoğlu and Kılınç, 2014). In this context, it can be stated that school principals generally exhibit either authoritarian leadership based on strict rules or benevolent leadership behaviours in which they demonstrate intimate relationships based on cultural structure. In parallel with the studies above, there are some studies which suggest that a paternalistic leadership style is one of the appropriate leadership styles for the cultural norms of Turkish society and that it has positive effects with regard to citizenship, intimidation and cynicism

in schools. These studies found that school principals displayed paternalistic leadership qualities frequently (Dağlı and Ağalday, 2018; Cerit, 2012; Cerit, 2013; Cerit et al., 2011; Mete and Serin, 2015; Aydıntan, 2016). Although there are intercultural comparative studies on educational leadership, there is a need for an in-depth analysis of school principals' leadership implementation in different countries in the context of different cultures (Harris, 2016; Ghamrawi, 2011). While the current studies reveal the level of paternalistic behaviour displayed by school principals, studies that analyse the effect of this behaviour on teachers' participation in decision making and their level of trust in school principals are absent in the literature. In addition, it is important to study the effects of a paternalistic leadership style on teachers in Turkish culture, which has a high power distance. Accordingly, in this study, the relationship between the school principals who display paternalistic leadership, teachers' participation in decision making and teachers' trust in the school principals was studied.

Conceptual Relationships and Hypotheses

Paternalist leadership, which is perceived as a form of authoritarianism and favouritism and which is uncommon in Western culture, is among the characteristics of traditional Asian, Middle Eastern and Latin American societies (Chen et al., 2014; Cheng et al., 2004; Farh and Cheng, 2000; Hofstede, 2001; 2011). In these societies, due to the family structures, a benevolent leader is considered to be a person who cares for the ones below him/her and forgives their errors. Benevolent leaders behave in an authoritarian way to ensure control over juniors, emphasise strict discipline and maintain the power of their status. Moral leaders prefer common

goals over individual profits and they value being responsible and honest, setting a good example and not being selfish. Due to the cultural structures of these societies, authoritarian leaders are observed to be an indisputable authority and disobedience is seen as disrespect. As a matter of fact, in these societies authority is assigned a spiritual meaning and workers are acknowledged to have limited capabilities (Aycan and Fikret-Pasa, 2003; Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008; Erben and Güneşer, 2008; Farh and Cheng, 2000). Research shows that the dimensions of paternalistic leadership, such as benevolence and morality, increase trust in the manager, while authoritarianism reduces trust in the manager (Ciraklar, Ucar, & Sezgin and 2016; Karasel, Altınay, Altınay and Dagli, 2018; Wu, et al., 2012). As a matter of fact, the leaders' ethical standards as well as their interest in the work and private lives of their employees can affect their employees' trust in them. Authoritarian leaders expect their employees to follow orders unconditionally. This situation prevents the employees' unity of purpose in management and their participation in decision-making processes (Karasel, et al., 2018; Ötken and Cenkci, 2012). The fact that Turkish society has a collectivist structure facilities managers' display of paternalistic leadership. In addition, the power distance is high in Turkish society and this situation increases the paternalistic leadership tendencies of the leaders. Consequently, in Turkish organisations which have a high power distance, managers are sincere, genial, tolerant and compassionate towards their workers and at the same time they take on the role of a family father who provides authority (Fikret Pasa, 2000; Aycan et al., 2000). Regarding this, a paternalistic leadership style in Turkish culture is associated not only with creating a family atmosphere but also with protecting and guiding the workers both in and outside the workplace, which indicates a context in which the

subordinates are dependent upon the managers. In response to this style, paternalistic leaders expect their workers to be loyal and respectful (Aycan, 2006; Aycan and Fikret-Pasa, 2003). Aycan et al. (2000) detected that the subordinates who work with paternalistic leaders cannot act independently and take the initiative. The reason for this is that paternalistic leaders, while partially having authoritarian characteristics, take decisions which they believe are good for the workers. They believe that they make decisions for the good of their workers, and they aim to protect and guide their workers as they see them as family members (Aycan, 2001). Despite this, decision making is made in the group together (Aycan and Fikret-Pasa, 2003). Considering this, effective school leaders try to have contact with the teachers all the time and they want to include them in the decision-making processes in order to increase their schools' academic performance and improve their own leadership capacity (Marks and Printy, 2003; Truong et al., 2016). In paternalistic leadership relationships, managers are not very willing to transfer their authority to workers for decision making (Pellegrini et al., 2010). Accordingly, even if paternalistic principals take teachers' views into consideration, it may be argued that the decision-making processes in these schools are not really democratic as the principals have the final say.

Paternalistic leaders expect loyalty and obedience from their workers in return for their protective attitude. Due to the sacred position of the managers, the loyalty and obedience of the workers demonstrate that they believe in the managers' trustworthy and honest personality (Fikret Pasa et al., 2001; Pellegrini et al., 2010; Wang and Wei, 2007). The high level of trust among workers in an organisation decreases conflicts in the organisation and increases organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour and

organisational performance (Verburg et al., 2017; Van Maele and Van Houtte, 2015). The emotional trust that stems from the relationship between the paternalistic leader and the worker has a critical role in workers' motivation and performance (Chen et al., 2011). As a matter of fact, Sheer (2010) found that the benevolent and moral leadership aspects of paternalistic leadership had a positive effect on workers' intrinsic motivation and that this contributed to work motivation. Moreover, the personal values the leader has may facilitate ensuring workers' trust and their participation in organisational processes. On the other hand, the subordinates, who expect the leader to display paternalistic leadership, show commitment and trust in their leaders and want them to guide themselves. However, the fatherly behaviour of the leaders may lead to favouritism among the workers and this may destabilise the sense of trust in the working environment (Aycan, 2001; Aycan, 2006). Considering this, it can be stated that the relationship between paternalistic school principals and teachers resembles a family environment, and decision making and hierarchical relationships are based on trust.

In the light of the explanations above, the aim of this study is to test a model which was formed to analyse the relationship between school principals' paternalistic behaviour in schools as educational organisations and teachers' participation in decision making, and the intermediary role of trust in principals in this relationship. Considering this focus, the following hypotheses were formed:

H1: Trust in principals has a role in the relationship between benevolence, as an aspect of paternalistic leadership, and teachers' participation in decision making.

H2: Trust in principals has a role in the relationship between morality, as an aspect of paternalistic leadership, and teachers' participation in decision making.

H3: Trust in principals has a role in the relationship between being authoritarian, as an aspect of paternalistic leadership, and teachers' participation in decision making.

Method

Research Model

In this study, the relationship between school principals' paternalistic leadership behaviours, trust in principals and teachers' participation in decision making was analysed according to teachers' perceptions. A correlational survey design was used in the study. In correlational studies, the relationships among variables, causal patterns and theoretical background can be explained via empirical evidence in the context of causal effects (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010).

Sample

The sample of this study consists of teachers who worked in primary and secondary schools in Istanbul in the academic year of 2017-2018. The main reason for selecting the sample from Istanbul province was because it is a cosmopolitan city which hosts citizens from 81 provinces of Turkey (TUIK, 2019). The study utilised convenience sampling. Therefore, 646 teachers who worked at different primary and secondary schools in the Çekmeköy district of Istanbul make up the voluntary participants of this study. When the demographic information of the participants was analysed, it was observed that 435 of them (67%) were females and 211 of them (33%)

were males. 138 of them worked at primary schools while 508 of them worked at secondary schools.

Data Collection Tools

Paternalistic Leadership Scale: The paternalistic leadership scale is a scale consisting of 26 statements and was developed by Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang and Farh (2004) and adapted for Turkish culture by Arslan (2004). The paternalistic leadership scale is a five-point Likert-type scale ranging between "completely disagree" and "completely agree". Among the sample items of the scale are "*The principal treats us like a family*" and "*The principal will not use me for his/her own interests*". As a result of the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was found to be .95 and the Bartlett Sphericity value was found as ($\chi 2$ = 9857.97, p: 0.00). The total variance accounted for as a result of the EFA was 64%. The variances accounted for in the leadership dimensions were 42% for benevolence, 7% for morality and 15% for authoritarianism. Cronbach's Alpha internal coefficient of consistency was used to designate the current scale's reliability and the coefficient was calculated as .86 for the whole scale. It was .95 for benevolence, .84 for moral leadership and .85 for authoritarian leadership. As a result of the analysis, it can be argued that the paternalistic leadership scale is a sufficiently reliable and valid data collection tool.

The Scale of Trust in Managers: The organisational trust scale, which was developed by Daboval, Comish, Swindle and Gaster (1994), was adapted for Turkish culture by Yılmaz (2005). In the current study, the sub-scale of trust in managers was used (Ugurluoglu et al., 2018). The Scale of Trust in Managers is a five-point Likert-type scale ranging between "completely disagree" and "completely agree". Among the sample items of the scale are "*The*

school principal deals with teachers' problems" and "*The school principal is sincere in his/her relationship with me*". For this study, construct validity was found to be significant in the KMO and Bartlett's Sphericity results (KMO = .95, $\chi 2$ = 6497.10, p: 0.00). The factor loadings of the items in the scale were between .61 and .77. The total variance accounted for was found as 71.17%. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient regarding the reliability of the scale was found to be .96. As a result of the current analysis, it may be argued that this scale is a reliable and valid tool.

The Scale of Participation in Decision Making: The scale of participation in decision making, which was developed by Vroom (1959) and adapted for Turkish culture by Karabağ Köse (2013), consists of 6 items. The scale is a five-point Likert-type scale ranging between "completely disagree" and "completely agree". Among the sample items of the scale are "*I find change regenerating*" and "*Change improves work enthusiasm*". According to the results of the EFA undertaken for reliability, KMO and Bartlett Sphericity results were found to be significant (KMO = .84, $\chi 2$= 2367.95, p: 0.00). The factor loadings of the items in the scale were between .54 and .71 and the total variance accounted for was detected as 65.29%. The reliability analysis showed that Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was .84. According to the analysis, it can be stated that the scale is a valid and reliable data collection instrument.

Data Analysis

The SPSS and AMOS package programs were used in the study. Initially, some assumptions were tested to determine the appropriateness for path analysis. The normality of the research variables was checked by taking histogram, Q-Q plot graph, median,

mode and averages into consideration together. As a result of the normality analysis for trust in managers, benevolent leadership, moral leadership, authoritarian leadership, and participation in decision making, the data normality assumptions were found to be sufficient. Then, multicollinearity was checked for the variables. The correlation values between predictor variables were found as .61, -.27, and .79. The analysis detected that VIF values of the variables were less than 10 and that tolerance values were well above zero. According to these results, the data was found to be appropriate for analysis. The significance level for the analysis is .05.

In order to understand whether the factor structures of the scales were coherent with the data of this study, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was undertaken. The references regarding CFA fit indices are as follows: when the coefficient obtained from *GFI* and *AGFI* is .85 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1984; Cole, 1987) or above .90 (Lomax and Schumacker, 2004; Kline, 2005), it is regarded as coherent. When the values that are obtained from *RMSEA* are .10 or less, this is sufficient for fitness. A $\chi 2/df$ ratio between 2-5 indicates a good fit while values below 2 indicate a perfect fit (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 2001).

Procedures

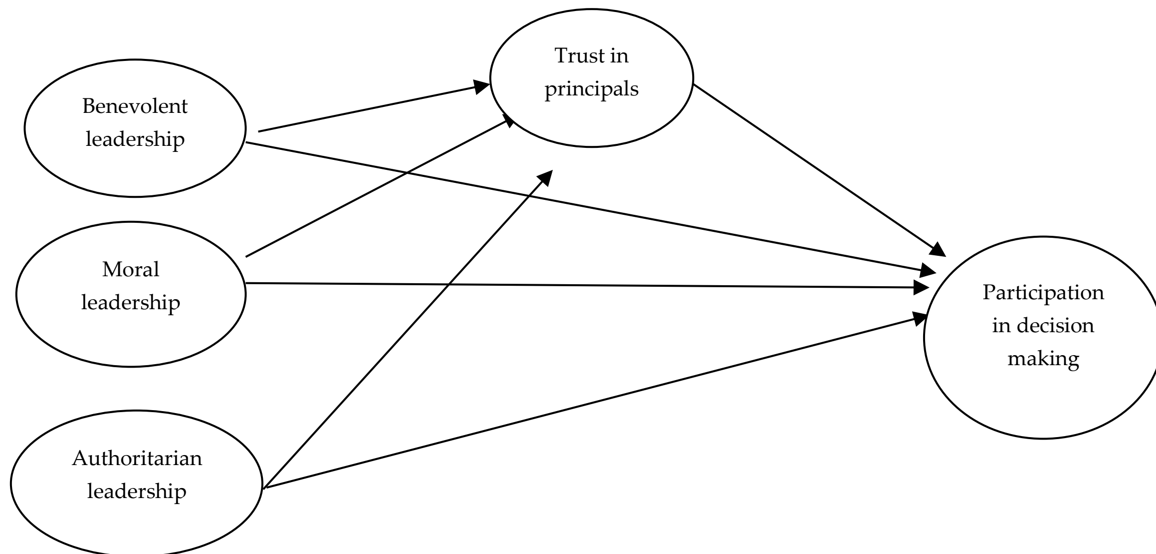
In this study, the theoretical model that was designed in accordance with the relevant literature was tested regarding the relationships between the variables via structural equation modelling (SEM). As the variables in the developed model (paternalistic leadership, trust in principals and participation in decision making) were formulated by theoretical concepts and structures that cannot be observed directly, by using SEM the variables in the theoretical structure were explained via some latent variables. SEM analysis is a

strong type of statistical analysis which tests the causality relationships between latent variables and observable variables and it is also capable of unearthing the relationships between many variables (Kenny and McCoach, 2003). Accordingly, in the model, principals' paternalistic leadership behaviours, trust in principals and participation in decision making in schools were treated as latent variables. The path analysis was studied in two steps to unearth the relationship between these variables. In the first step, the values regarding significance were calculated and in the second step insignificant paths were excluded from the analysis.

In the model that was developed in the study, the SEM was used to identify the effect of paternalistic leadership on trust in principals, which was the intermediary variable, and on participation in decision making in the context of cause and effect variables. In this way, whether the data obtained through the SEM was coherent with the model or not was checked. In the SEM analysis which was undertaken as part of the study, path analysis was used to merge the measurement error in the latent and observed variables. The theoretical model that was tested in the study is demonstrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

The Proposed Research Model



Findings

The average and standard deviation of the variables and the correlations between the variables are presented in Table 1. As seen in Table 1, teachers' perception of benevolence as a dimension of paternalistic leadership was calculated as ($\overline{X}$ =4.05), moral leadership was calculated as ($\overline{X}$ =4.34), authoritarian leadership was calculated as ($\overline{X}$ =2.13), trust in principals was calculated as ($\overline{X}$ =4.43) and participation in decision making was calculated as ($\overline{X}$ =4.04).

Table 1.

Average and Standard Deviation of Variables and Correlations between Variables

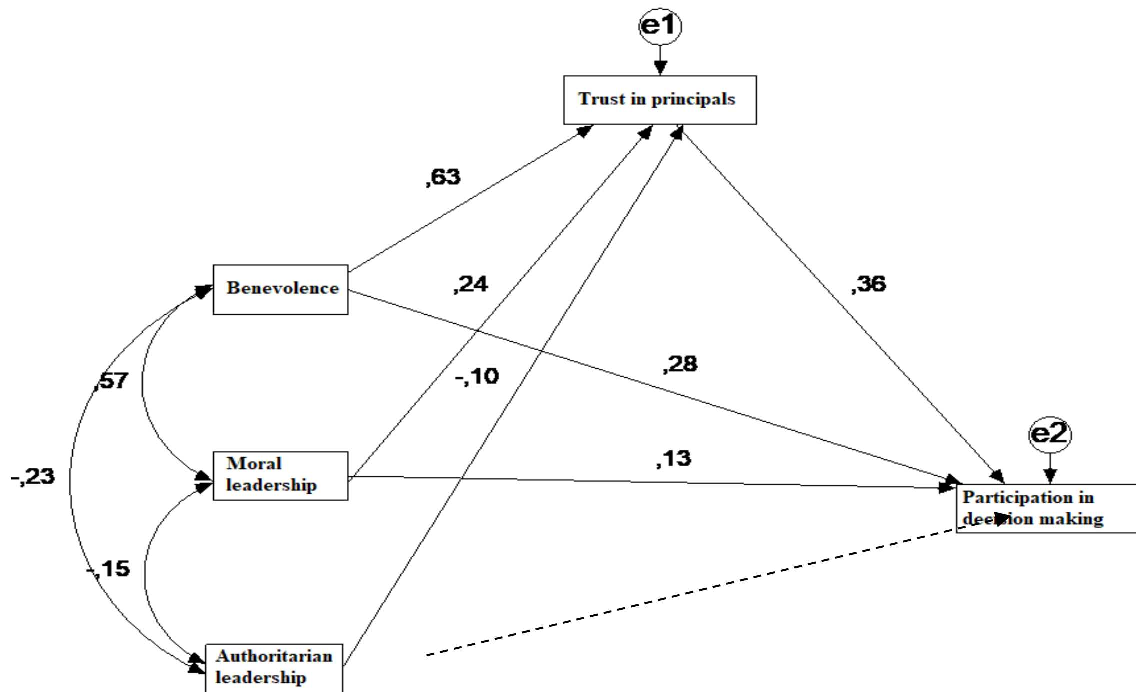
Variables	$\overline{X}$	Sd.	BL	ML	AL	PDM	TP
1-Benevolence	4.05	.81	1	.56**	-.22**	.63**	.79**
2-Moral leadership	4.34	.89		1	-.15**	.50**	.61**
3-Authoritarian leadership	2.13	.90			1	-.23**	-.27**
4-Participation in decision making	4.04	.76				1	.66**
5-Trust in principals	4.43	.70					1

** r=.001. BL: Benevolence Leadership, ML: Moral Leadership, AL: Authoritarian Leadership, PDM: Participation in Decision Making, TP: Trust in Principals

In Table 1, a significant and positive correlation was detected between participation in decision making and benevolence (r = .63, p < .01), and between participation in decision making and moral leadership (r = .50, p < .01). A significant and negative correlation (r = -.23, p < .01) was found between participation in decision making and authoritarian leadership. A significant and positive correlation was found between trust in principals and benevolent leadership (r = .79, p < .01), and between trust in principals and moral leadership (r = .61, p < .01), while a significant and negative correlation (r = -.27, p < .01) was found between trust in principals and authoritarian leadership.

Figure 2.

The Acquired Model (Insignificant paths are shown with dashed lines.)



In the results of the SEM analysis of the model in Figure 2, the path coefficient between authoritarian leadership and participation in decision making was found to be insignificant. Except for this, all the correlations and path coefficients were observed to be significant. The goodness of fit indices of the tested model verified the model (χ^2 = 3.00; p >.05; df = 1; χ^2/df = 3; *RMSEA* = .05; *CFI* =.99; *GFI* = .99, *AGFI* =.97). The aspects of paternalistic leadership behaviour and trust in managers accounted for 48% of the variance of teachers' participation in decision making.

Direct Effects: In the model, benevolent leadership was found to positively predict trust in managers (β=.63, p <.01) and teachers'

participation in decision making (β=.28, $p < .01$). Moral leadership was found to positively predict trust in managers (β=.24, $p < .01$) and teachers' participation in decision making (β=.13, $p < .01$). However, authoritarian leadership was found to negatively predict trust in managers (β= -.10, $p < .01$). Finally, trust in managers as an intermediary variable was found to positively predict teachers' participation in decision making (β= .36, $p <.01$).

Indirect Effects: This model predicted the effect of benevolent leadership on teachers' participation in decision making via trust in managers. Trust in managers had a partial intermediary role between benevolent leadership and participation in decision making (t_{sobel}=6.84, $p<.01$). Moral leadership also predicted teachers' participation in decision making via trust in managers. Trust in managers had a partial intermediary role between moral leadership and participation in decision making (t_{sobel}=5.39, $p<.01$). Finally, authoritarian leadership negatively predicted teachers' participation in decision making via trust in managers. Trust in managers had a full intermediary role between authoritarian leadership and participation in decision making. To explain this more clearly, authoritarian leadership initially decreased trust in managers and this decreased trust diminished teachers' participation in decision-making processes.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the goal was to test the model which was created to put forward the relationship between school principals' paternalistic leadership behaviour, trust in managers and teachers' participation in decision making from the perspective of teachers that worked at primary and secondary schools. The findings suggest that

teachers tend to distrust authoritarian school leaders, but that they are more likely to trust those who include them in decisions. Moreover, when the relationship between the variables was checked, a positive and significant relationship at a medium level was found between benevolent and moral leadership, and between trust in managers and teachers' participation in decision making. On the other hand, a negative and significant relationship at a low level was detected between authoritarian leadership and teachers' participation in decision making and trust in managers.

In this study, a linear model was formed assuming that paternalistic leadership behaviours affect trust in managers and that trust in managers affects teachers' participation in decision making. In order to unearth the relationships between the latent variables of the model, path analysis was utilised, and the high fit indices that were obtained as a result of the analysis demonstrated that the model was a perfect model. When the relationship between the variables in the model was checked, significant correlations were detected between benevolent, moral and authoritarian leadership, and between trust in managers and teachers' participation in decision-making processes. In the tested model, the strongest direct effects were found between benevolent and moral leadership, and between trust in managers and teachers' participation in decision making. According to this finding, principals' caring about teachers' problems that are related or unrelated to their jobs and seeing the teachers as their own children increases trust in principals. Consequently, it may be argued that when principals care strongly about teachers' teaching in schools, their relationships with their colleagues, and their family problems and personal problems, they are perceived as good school managers by the teachers. In this context, it may be suggested that trust in managers facilitates teachers' participation in decision-

making processes. This result is in line with the empirical studies in the literature (Chen et al., 2014; Cheng et al., 2004). According to Aycan (2006), in the Eastern culture benevolent leaders try to ensure a peaceful working environment. The goal of this type of leader is to make workers happy in the workplace. The workers who are aware of this situation feel grateful to the managers, and so they trust them.

In this study, trust in managers was found to have a partial intermediary role in the relationship between benevolent and moral leadership, and teachers' participation in decision making. To clarify this, teachers' view that school principals display moral and benevolent behaviour increases their trust in their principals and this positively affects teachers' participation in decision making. Ötken and Cenkci (2012), in their study on businesses, concluded that trust in managers had an intermediary role in the effect of paternalistic leadership on ethical climate. In their study on businesses in Turkey and China, Wasti, Tan and Erdil (2011) demonstrated that the awareness about benevolent behaviours that leaders created among their workers had a strong effect on workers' showing loyalty and dependence. Similarly, according to Pellegrini and Scandura (2008), paternalism is equated with an individual's voluntary compliance and they stated that trust is an important factor in the relationship between workers and a paternalistic leader who is in the position of a father. In the same vein, Aycan (2006) stated that benevolent leadership has a fundamental role in the construction of trust among workers. The results of these studies suggest that via trust in managers, paternalistic leadership behaviour can positively affect workers' participation. The results of the present study show that school principals' assistance to teachers increases teachers' trust in their managers. In addition, the fact that school leaders prioritise organisational goals rather than individual profits and avoid

discrimination among workers indicates their morality. In this way, this may help teachers try to perform their duties as well as possible and focus on organisational goals rather than individual interests in the school environment. Considering this, it may be argued that trust in managers is a significant concept in the formation of the relationship between benevolent and moral leadership, and teachers' participation in decision making.

Finally, the results showed that principals' authoritarian leadership decreased trust in principals and that the decreased trust negatively affected teachers' participation in decision making regarding the processes in their jobs. In this relationship, trust in managers has a full intermediary role. In the literature, authoritarian leadership is defined as the leader's requiring unconditional obedience to his orders. Moreover, the workers must display their respect and loyalty to their leaders explicitly. In this leadership style, workers are completely controlled by the managers. Participation in decision-making processes is very low. The relationship between workers and managers is formal and managers' interaction with workers is rather weak (Cheng et al., 2004). In addition, as authoritarian leaders are afraid of their workers, they avoid sharing their authority. Accordingly, school principals' authoritarian leadership behaviours may hinder the operation of the management and teaching services, which are interrelated. It can be suggested that this situation negatively affects the development and success of a school.

Limitations and Implications

The fact that the study was undertaken only on teachers limits the power of analysis and evaluation and accordingly, studies that are undertaken on school principals may unearth different perspectives on this subject. Studies undertaken in different regions of the country will make the results more representative and this will lead to more generalisable findings. Presenting paternalistic leadership and its relationship with variables can lead to the emergence of rich theoretical and applied knowledge based on Turkey as an Eastern society in which a paternalistic leadership style is more suited to the characteristics of leaders.

Some suggestions may be provided considering the results obtained in this study. According to the findings, school principals' benevolent behaviours, such as solving teachers' problems in work or personal lives, may increase teachers' trust in the principals and facilitate teachers' participation in decision making. When school principals assign roles fairly and promote merit in accordance with the goals and objectives of the school in comparison to focusing on personal benefit, this may increase teachers' trust in school principals. In this way, trust in school principals who have high moral values may facilitate teachers' participation in decision making. On the other hand, displaying authoritarian styles, in which the interaction between principals and teachers is weak and strict, less frequently may increase teachers' trust in principals. Accordingly, it can be argued that when a principal enables a trust environment in a school and takes into consideration teachers' views and suggestions in decision making, this may develop a school and its atmosphere.

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Leader Narcissism and Defensive Silence in Higher Education: A Moderated Mediation Model of Interactional Justice and Value Congruence

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the relationship between the narcissism of leader and the defensive silence of employee. Specifically, it introduces interactional justice as mediator by taking a relational approach. It also considers the moderating role of leader-follower congruence in the relationship between leader narcissism and defensive silence. The sample included 1,023 randomly selected faculty members and department chairs from 15 universities in Turkey. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis tested the proposed model. The findings supported the positive relationship between leader narcissism and employee's defensive silence as well as interactional justice's mediating role. Moreover, when the level of congruence of leader-follower value is high, the relationship between leader narcissism and defensive silence is also strong, whereas the relationship is weak when the level of congruence of leader-follower value is low. This study contributes to employee silence literature by revealing the relationship between leader narcissism and employee silence. In addition, this study provides practical assistance to higher education employees along with their leaders interested in building

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Introduction

Employee silence is common in modern organizations and is currently a critical issue in organizational management (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Van Dyne et al., 2003). It acknowledges the intent to withhold information, opinions, suggestions or concerns about potentially essential organizational issues (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Van Dyne et al., 2003; Wang and Hsieh, 2013). Employee silence is a multidimensional construct (Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Van Dyne et al., 2003). It could be classified into three categories relating to cause(s) behind intentionally withholding information: acquiescent silence (a disengaged behavior stimulated by resignation), defensive silence (a self-protective behavior activated by fear), and prosocial silence (an others-oriented behavior that is instigated by the cooperation purpose). Acquiescent silence and defensive silence tend to be dysfunctional for organizations, as they may interfere with organizational change (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Ryan and Oestreich, 1991) and restrict the introduction of organizational performance (Tangirala and Ramanujam, 2008; Van Dyne et al., 2003).

We concentrated our interest in defensive silence in this research because we were mainly interested in the types of silence of

employees that have a negative consequence on organizations. Prosocial silence, based on altruism or cooperative motives and aimed at benefiting others (Van Dyne et al., 2003), was not included in this study because it is not really detrimental to organizations. Unfortunately, there is so far only limited knowledge on the relationship between leader traits and employee silence (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2019). The present study aims to fill this gap in the research by examining the leader trait-defensive silence relationship. Building on the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), we propose that followers are likely to reciprocate their leader's narcissism by engaging in counterproductive work behavior such as defensive silence, which are detrimental to the organization and to coworkers.

Defensive silence is related with the leader's traits, behaviors, and attitudes (Detert and Burris, 2007; Lee et al., 2018). As a leader's trail, narcissism has been a significant topic in the leadership literature in part because it is easy to identify narcissism at the top of organizations and in part because narcissism seems well-suited for leadership (Campbell and Campbell, 2009). Narcissism refers to a personality trait including grandiosity, arrogance, self-absorption, entitlement, fragile self-esteem, and hostility (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006). Known as one of the dark triads of personality traits, narcissism is generally regarded as a destructive leadership trait (Godkin and Allcorn, 2011). Research in leadership have routinely linked leader narcissism to negative workplace behaviors including defensive silence because narcissistic leaders are exploitative, overly sensitive to criticism, arrogant, egocentric, possess a sense of entitlement and lack empathy towards others (e.g., Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006; Godkin and Allcorn, 2011). Prior research reveals leader's narcissism is usually associated with workplace deviance and numerous unethical and exploitative behaviors such as

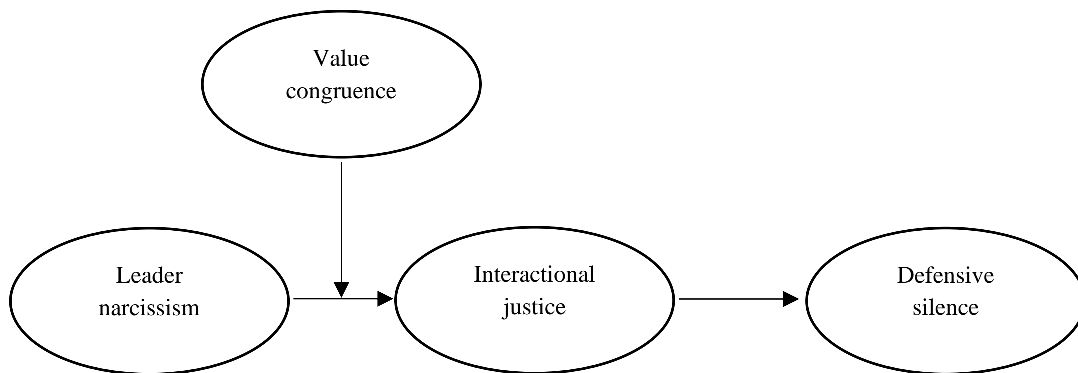
tendencies to cheat, inadequate workplace integrity, and even white-collar crime (Grijalva and Harms, 2014). When followers perceive their leaders as narcissistic, they experience workplace psychological strain, pressure, and depression. They also develop negative follower attitudes such as cynicism, turnover intention, low job satisfaction, low commitment, and silence (Grijalva and Harms, 2014). In this study, we focus on the process where leader narcissism is related with important follower outcomes like defensive silence. Nevertheless, despite narcissism's long-standing existence in the leadership literature, related research in the broad management and applied psychology literature continues to be in its infancy. To our knowledge, no study has offered to an understanding of how leader's narcissism pertains to employees' defensive silence, though leadership is among the most influential predictors of defensive silence (Briensfield, 2013). Consequently, the first objective of the study is to handle this extremely untouched concern.

In addition, this study investigates leader-follower value congruence as the boundary condition for the leader's narcissism, i.e. the interactional justice relationship. Existing theories and research indicate that leadership behavior, followers' individual difference and contextual factors (locus of control, proactive personality, political skill and leader-follower value congruence) are considerably related with employee silence (e.g., Briensfield, 2013; Lee et al., 2017). Prior researchers stressed that leader-follower value congruence is an essential factor that prevents undesirable employee outcomes such as workplace cynicism and workplace silence (Duan et al., 2018). However, scholars have not really considered the interactive relationships of leader's narcissism and leader-follower value congruence on workplace silence; this concerns how leadership and organizational members can lower defensive silence (Lee et al., 2017).

This study intends to contribute to the prevailing literature in several ways. First, it pursues to fill up the understanding gap between leader's narcissism and employee defensive silence. Earlier research has proven that leader's traits, behaviors and attitudes are being among the most important factors relating to employee silence. Second, determining how interactional justice decreases employees' workplace silence has received little empirical interest in organizational justice literature (Wang and Jiang, 2015). The present study uses social exchange theory, as the primary theoretical focus, and takes a step further to acknowledge the mediating role of interactional justice on the leader's narcissism -defensive silence link. The results could progress our knowledge of the processes where the leader's narcissism is related with workplace silence. Finally, this study plays a part in the literature by examining how the leader's narcissism increases employees' silence via lower interactional justice, which explains the moderating role of the leader-follower value congruence. Fig. 1 summarizes the theoretical model that guided this study.

Figure 1.

Proposed moderated-mediation model.



Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

Leader's Narcissism and Employee Defensive Silence

To fully understand the adverse consequences of narcissism, considering the psychological components that motivate the behavior of narcissists is truly beneficial. The exploratory group of (highly interconnected) psychological foundations of narcissistic leaders consists of arrogance, hypersensitivity and anger, lack of empathy and paranoia (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006). Narcissistic arrogance is the most obvious behavior to others (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) and obviously is associated with social problems (Ronningstam, 2005). In situations where this grandiosity itself is threatened with a feeling of inferiority, narcissists often attract feelings of superiority. It is therefore likely that they will react with extreme hypersensitivity and anger (Horowitz and Arthur, 1988). "Narcissistic leaders might screen strong hostility as an exaggerated response for an insult while sense totally justified committing horrific atrocities in response" (Horowitz and Arthur, 1988:136). Narcissistic leaders also lack empathy. They make decisions that are guided by an idiosyncratic, self-centered view and disregard the advice that disagrees. Finally, narcissistic leaders are paranoiac (Glad, 2002); they may be "more likely to create opponents where there were none" (Glad, 2002:30).

Researchers acclaim that narcissistic leadership is related with on follower behaviors through social exchange processes (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2017; Meurs et al., 2013). According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), individuals may change their attitudes or behaviors, depending on how they perceive they are being treated or on the need for reciprocity. When followers perceive a leader as nurturing and worried about well-being, they feel valued to

reciprocate the support of that leader in conjunction with social exchange theory. On the other hand, when a leader treats a follower with arrogance, hypersensitivity, and anger or insufficient empathy, that follower considers the exchange relationship to be imbalanced or exploited. This leads to psychological strain relating his / her attitudes to work (O'Boyle et al., 2012), improves retaliatory behavior (e.g., deviance, Erkutlu and Chafra, 2016; Meurs et al., 2013) and reduces work effort (Harris et al., 2007). Building on these ideas, Meurs et al. (2013) proposed that narcissistic leaders stimulate feelings of distrust and injustice in their followers. Furthermore, they create an organizational environment where followers will reciprocate with harmful organizational outcomes including increased emotional exhaustion and silence and also reduced organizational commitment.

In addition, distrust in the leader is negatively associated with the self-efficacy of employees (Yang and Mossholder, 2010). In other words, the higher the distrust in the leader, the lower there will be self-efficacy of individuals to make difference in the organization. We therefore assume that employees with a higher level of distrust generally have a lower level of self - efficacy, which prevents them from sharing their concerns in order to make a difference in their organization, while people with a lower degree of distrust are more likely to have a higher degree of self - efficacy in order to make changes using their recommendations and not to remain defensively silent. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. The perception of leader's narcissism is positively related to employee's defensive silence.

Mediating Role of Interactional Justice

Interactional justice refers to the perceived fairness of social communication and treatment an individual receives from others in the organization (Murphy et al., 2003). It is undoubtedly one of the perceptions that relate to employee silence (Morrison, 2014). Earlier research recommended that interactional justice decreases employee silence (Huang and Huang, 2016; Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Takeuchi et al., 2012).

When individuals think that their process of interacting with the organization and the people in authority is fair, they consider that they are respected and are pleased with the organization where they are employed, thereby encouraging identification with the organization. This, consequently, causes them to show discretionary (e.g., cooperative) behaviors. Interactional justice has been demonstrated to improve employees' identification with their organization (Patel et al., 2012). This feeling of identification stimulates employees to consider organizational problems as their own and also to comprehend that their voice on organizational problems will be taken utterly. As a result, interactional justice can motivate employees to break the silence.

We suggest that the leader narcissism may relate with subordinates' defensive silence through employees' perceived interactional justice. First, we suggest that leader narcissism could decrease trust through perceptions of interactional injustice. Concentrate on absolute authority, control, arrogance, anger, inadequate empathy, and paranoia over subordinates could make subordinates feel anxious, oppressed. These, ultimately, result in negative social exchanges between supervisors and subordinates. Leader narcissism will most likely induce fear and anger (Braun et al.,

2016). Appropriately, we anticipate a positive association between leader narcissism and defensive silence.

Secondly, we recommend that interpersonal justice be perceived as an important mechanism underlying the relationship between narcissism and defensive silence. Because narcissistic leaders are less likely to screen subordinates ' respect, provide them with sufficient information, and allow them to voice their concerns, subordinates tend to perceive interactional injustice. Indeed, Campbell et al. (2011) found a negative relationship of leader narcissism on interactional justice perceptions of subordinates. In addition, research has exhibited that perceptions of injustice or unfairness in a social exchange imply subordinates generally do not really reciprocate supervisory trust (Wu et al., 2012). In fact, when subordinates perceive less interactional justice of their interactions with their supervisors, they are actually even more prepared to withhold relevant ideas, information, or opinions as a type of self-protection. Consequently, leader narcissism may boost defensive silence through its relationship with perceived interactional justice.

We suppose, however, a partial instead of a full mediation of perceptions of interactional justice in the leader narcissism-defensive silence relationship. This is because leader narcissism could increase defensive silence through mechanisms aside from interactional justice. Leader narcissism in fact can boost anxiety and a sense of uncertainty amongst employees because the punitive behavior of leaders has actually gone out of personal control and is generally unpredictable. Feelings of anxiety, uncertainty and a high degree of employee silence have been confirmed (Kenworthy and Jones 2009). Leader narcissism can thus engender the defensive silence of

employees through alternative mediators. Taken together, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. The positive relationship between leader's narcissism and employee's defensive silence is partially mediated by interactional justice.

The Moderating Role of Leader-Follower Value Congruence

Value congruence can be defined as the similarity between a leader and his/her followers in relation to personal values. As the leader and his/her followers work towards a common vision, they are likely to develop a more similar core set of values. This experience boosts followers ' interpersonal confidence, personal attachment and motivation (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002).

The person-job fit theory (Edwards and Cable, 2009) suggests that value congruence might encourage communication, predictability and trust. These positive features are recognized as the antecedents of psychological need fulfillment. Furthermore, the theory of basic psychological needs (Ryan and Deci, 2000) suggests that the satisfaction of basic psychological needs is crucial for intrinsic motivation and positive work behavior, whereas the lack of basic psychological needs would lead to negative attitudes and behaviors such as cynicism, deviant behaviors, and workplace silence. So, it really is rational to presume that value congruence might progress the types of positive qualities (e.g., communication, predictability) that will be the antecedent conditions for psychological need fulfillment. Researchers recommend that, when the degrees of trust and psychological need fulfillment are high, individuals are much more likely to engage in social exchange and cooperative interaction (Gambetta, 1988; Kramer and Tyler, 1996).

The research suggests that considering personal values will make it easier for us to understand the relationship between leaders and supporters (Brown and Treviño 2009). Personal values as relatively lasting convictions that guide attitudes, behaviors and decisions (Suar and Khuntia, 2010) have serious implications for individuals in general. In terms of relationships between leader and follower, the value congruence immediately becomes important (Lee et al. 2017).

However, not every employee can share similar values along with his or her leader. Therefore, we expect that individual differences in value congruence are related with the link between leader narcissism and defensive silence. Therefore, the relationship of leader narcissism on defensive silence styles becomes weaker as the value congruence increases. Given that supervisors are believed agents of the organization, their treatment of subordinates as well as their value congruence with subordinates can relate with employees' perception of interactional justice (Carter et al., 2014). When employees have high-level of value congruence with their immediate supervisor, thus enjoying discretion, support, autonomy, and developmental possibilities, they perceive they are treated with dignity within their interpersonal interactions, such as spoken to politely, without inappropriate remarks or prejudicial statements. However, when employees have a low-level of value congruence with their immediate supervisor, they could suspect if they can trust and create a long-term relationship with their leaders and perceive low fairness in regard to the interpersonal treatment. Thus, value congruence should complement the consequences of narcissistic personality on interactional justice. Hence, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3. Leader's narcissism influences employee defensive silence through its relationship with interactional justice and the indirect relationship will be stronger when the leader-follower value congruence is weak rather than when it is strong.

Combining Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, we suggest a moderated mediation model, demonstrated in Fig. 1, to test the relationship between followers' perceptions of the leader's narcissism and defensive silence; the model includes interactional justice as a mediator and leader-follower value congruence as a moderator.

Methods

Participants

This study's accessible population contains faculty members from 15 Turkish Universities. The sample of the research included 1,023 faculty members with their supervisors (department chairs). These universities were randomly chosen from all the 185 universities in the country (The Council of Turkish Higher Education, 2019). Academic personnel employed in Turkish higher education institutions (public or private) are subject to the definitions and job descriptions stated in the Law on Higher Education (Turkish Higher Education Council, 2019). The two main qualification levels of teaching staff members are the following: "Teaching Staff Members" are those who do not hold an academic title such as lecturer, instructor and ancillary staff and "Teaching Faculty Members" are those who hold an academic title such as *professor*, *associate professor*, and *Dr., faculty member* (Turkish Higher Education Council, 2019). Faculty members are the participants of this study. A faculty member is an academician responsible for teaching certain compulsory and selective subjects common to students in various programs and

undertaking scientific and scholarly research for publication. Department chairs are also faculty members. They are elected by faculty members at the universities in Turkey.

A cluster random-sampling method was utilized to choose the sample. Using this sampling method, the division of the entire population into homogeneous groups increases the feasibility of sampling. In addition, as each cluster represents the entire population, more subjects can be included in the study. First, all of Turkey's universities were stratified into seven strata related to their geographical regions. Universities in each stratum were subsequently selected proportionally with a cluster random sampling; the study sample was comprised of faculty members working at selected universities. 4 universities from Marmara Region (27%), 3 universities from Central Anatolia (20%), 2 universities from Aegean Region (13%), 2 universities from Black Sea Region (13%), 2 universities from Mediterranean Region (13%), 1 university from East Anatolia Region (7%) and 1 university from Southeastern Anatolia Region (7%) were selected for this study. Private universities (27% of all the universities in this study) were also included in this study (2 from Marmara, 1 from Central Anatolia and 1 from Aegean Regions).

A research team of seven doctoral students visited the selected universities and received approval for the distribution of questionnaires from deans of economics and administrative sciences, fine arts, science and literature, engineering, medicine, and education faculties. Participants were informed that research was carried out to gather information on the faculty members' defensive silence levels and perceptions of their department chairs' narcissism in the higher education workforce. They had been offered confidentially

assurances and were informed that involvement was voluntary. After filling the questionnaires, they had been gathered immediately.

In terms of ethical considerations in data collection, after having obtained approvals from the faculties' deans, all procedures essential to ensure confidentiality for the participant and transparency of the researcher were taken. The survey invitation and guidelines noted the confidential nature of the study. Measures used order to do this result included specific language of confidentiality, identification of the individual researcher and research institution, identification of risks if any, and clarity of expected levels of participation and other relevant information (Creswell, 2009). The data collected remained confidential and individual data had not been made public in virtually any manner.

The faculty members who voluntarily participated in our study filled in the narcissism, defensive silence, interactional justice and leader-follower value congruence scales (69-100 faculty members per university). After missing-data analysis, 477 respondents (totaling 1,023 out of 1,500 participants) who failed to answer more than 20% of the items were excluded from the sample to reduce inaccuracies in the statistical analysis. Based on Tabachnick and Fidell's (1996) approach, 18 missing values were replaced with the series' mean for that respondent. 63 percent of the faculty members were female with an average age of 31.29 years. Furthermore, 83 percent of the department chairs had been male with an average age of 42.13 years. The average organizational tenure was 9.36 years for the faculty members and 12.19 years for the department chairs. The response rate was 68.20 percent.

Measures

Leader narcissism. It was measured by using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin and Terry, 1988; α = .89). This is a 40-item scale. Example items included "My leader (the department chair of the faculty member) is a born leader," and "My leader is more capable than other people". Items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Disagree very much) to 5 (Agree very much). Higher scores on the NPI represent higher levels of narcissism. Related Cronbach alpha turned out to be .80 in this study.

Defensive silence. It was measured by the five items scale adapted from Van Dyne *et al.* (2003). A sample item is "I do not speak up and suggest ideas for change, based on fear." Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the items on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's α for this study was .90.

Interactional justice. It was measured by using Niehoff and Moorman's (1993) 5-item interactional justice scale. The scale is used to measure the interpersonal behavior of the immediate supervisor when decisions are made about subordinates' jobs. All items used a five-point response format ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item is 'When decisions are made about my job, my supervisor treats me with kindness and consideration'. Cronbach's alpha turned out to be 0.89 in this study.

Leader-follower value congruence. It was measured by using Cable and Derue's (2002) 3-item value congruence scale. A sample item is ''My personal values match my supervisor's values and ideals.'' The items used a 1–5 response scale (''strongly disagree'' to ''strongly agree''). The Cronbach's α for this study was .93.

Control variables. The demographic factors: age and gender, found to be significantly related to employee silence (Wang and Hsieh, 2013), were controlled. They were included as control variables in the regression equations because of their potential relationships with the dependent variable as suggested by Cohen *et al.*, 2003. Age was measured in years whereas gender was measured as a dichotomous variable coded as 1 for male and 0 for female.

In two interrelated steps, we tested our hypotheses. First, we carried out a hierarchical regression analysis to use the simple mediation model (Hypotheses 1 and 2) of Baron and Kenny (1986). As Hayes and Preacher (2010) and Preacher and Hayes (2004) recently recommended a bootstrap approach to confidence intervals (CIs), we also tested the mediation hypothesis using a bootstrap test and the Sobel test. Second, we examined the overall moderated mediation hypothesis using Preacher et al. (2007) SPSS macro. Through these procedures, we confirmed that the strength of the hypothesized mediating (indirect) role of interactional justice on the relationship between leader narcissism and defensive silence depends on the moderator's value (i.e., congruence of leader-follower value).

The results of testing the assumptions of the regression analysis showed that all the following conditions were met: The Durbin Watson index was 1.69, indicating no residual autocorrelation; the minimum value of the tolerance limit for the variables was 0.71 or greater than 0.10; and the maximum value of the variance inflation factor was 1.90, which was smaller than 10, indicating that multicollinearity was not a problem. In addition, the results of the residual analysis confirmed the linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity of the model. The linearity was inspected for plot regression standardized residuals and regression standardized

predicted values with the dependent variable of leader's narcissism. Linearity is presented by a randomized distribution of negative and positive values with no obvious pattern in the plot. The Breusch-Pagan test was used to investigate homoscedasticity. If the p value is less than 0.05, homoscedasticity is not present. The normality of the whole distribution was tested with the Anderson-Darling test. If the p value is less than 0.05, normality is not present.

Results

Before testing the hypotheses within the proposed model, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to assess model fit and construct validity by using the AMOS software package (Arbuckle, 2006). Model fit is a series of tests to see how well the covariance matrix from the sample matches the proposed model (Kenny, 2015). Results showed that the hypothesized 4-factor model of leader narcissism, interactional justice, leader-follower value congruence, and defensive silence, $\chi 2$=2411.19, df=919; RMSEA=.07; CFI=.92 and IFI=.92, yielded a better fit to the data than any other models including a 1-factor model (i.e., combining all four study variables), $\chi 2$=8582.26. df=926; RMSEA=.017; CFI=.52 and TLI=.52. These CFA results also provide support for the distinctiveness of the four study variables for subsequent analyses.

Table 1 shows all study variables' means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations. Most of the variables were correlated in the expected direction. The control variables were not significantly correlated with the dependent variable (defensive silence). Furthermore, all the measures showed high internal reliabilities.

Table 1.

Means, standard deviations, and correlations of studied variables (n = 1023).

Variable	*M*	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age (year)	31.29	1.93					
2. Gender	0.63	0.37	-0.04				
3. Leader narcissism	3.69	0.79	0.05	0.05			
4. Interactional justice	3.11	0.89	-0.07	0.06	-0.25**		
5. Value congruence	3.29	0.93	-0.05	0.07	-0.16*	0.25**	
6. Defensive silence	3.06	0.96	0.08	-0.08	0.36***	-0.32***	-0.33***

* *p* <.05.
** *p* <.01.
*** *p* <.001.

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, leader narcissism showed a positive relationship with defensive silence (β = 0.36, p < 0.001). Hypothesis 2 posited that interactional justice mediates the relationship between leader narcissism and defensive silence. To test our hypothesis concerning the mediating role of interactional justice, we used the approach suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986). This mediation test has certain significant features. First, the independent variable should be significantly related to the dependent variable. Second, there should be a significant relationship between the independent variable and the mediator. Finally, the mediator should be significantly related to the dependent variables with the independent variables included in the equation. If the first three conditions hold, at least partial mediation is present. If the independent variables have non-significant beta weights in the third step, full mediation exists.

The result of the test for Hypothesis 1 satisfied the first condition of mediation. Next, the result of the test for the significant relationship between leader narcissism and interactional justice

satisfied the second mediating effect criterion (β = -0.23, $p < 0.01$). To test the third criterion, the dependent variable was regressed on the mediating variable, controlling for leader narcissism. As reported, interactional justice was significant (β = −0.26, $p < 0.01$), reducing the coefficient of the effect of leader narcissism on defensive silence (β = 0.05, n.s.). Therefore, the result of the mediation analysis suggests that the effect of leader narcissism on employee defensive silence is fully mediated by employees' interactional justice.

We then tested the significance of the indirect relationships using the Sobel test and bootstrapping in accordance with the procedure used by Hayes and Preacher (2010). The formal two-tail significance test (assuming normal distribution) showed a significant indirect relationship (Sobel z= 2.19, p= 0.03). The Sobel test was confirmed by the bootstrapping results. In particular, we estimated that by bootstrapping 10,000 samples, 95 percent of bias-corrected CIs had indirect relationships. Shrout and Bolger (2002) suggested that the researcher can be assured that the indirect relationship is different from zero if zero is not in the CI. In this study, the CI is between −0.10 and −0.01, excluding zero in the CI, which suggests that the indirect relationship in our model is statistically significant. Hypothesis 2 has therefore been supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the indirect effect of interactional justice between leader narcissism and defensive silence would be weakened by high leader-follower value congruence. The results indicate that the interaction term between leader narcissism and leader-follower value congruence on interactional justice is significant (β = −0.20, $p < 0.01$). To confirm the direction of this interaction effect, we applied conventional procedures for plotting simple slopes (see Fig. 2) at one standard deviation above and below the mean of the

leader-follower value congruence measure. As expected, the slope of the relationship between leader narcissism and interactional justice was strong for employees who assessed leader-follower value congruence as low (simple slope = 0.29, t = 3.66, $p < 0.001$), whereas the slope was weak for employees who assessed leader-follower value congruence as high (simple slope = −0.01, t = −0.11, p = n.s.).

Next, to examine the conditional indirect relationship of leader narcissism on defensive silence (through interactional justice) at two values of leader-follower value congruence, we used an SPSS macro developed by Preacher et al. (2007). Following their recommendation, we set high and low levels of leader-follower value congruence at one standard deviation above and below the mean score of leader-follower value congruence. As expected, the indirect relationship of leader narcissism on defensive silence via interactional justice was conditional upon the level of leader-follower value congruence. The indirect relationship was stronger (−0.06) and significant at a low level of leader-follower value congruence (CI ranging from −0.09 to −0.01 and not crossing zero) but was weaker (−0.00) and insignificant at a high level of leader-follower value congruence (CI ranging from −0.04 to 0.03, crossing zero). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Table 2.

Regression analysis for testing mediation.

Variables	Interactional justice		Defensive silence		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	-0.06	-0.03	0.06	0.04	0.03
Gender	0.05	0.04	-0.07	-0.06	-0.03
Leader narcissism		-0.23**		0.34***	0.05
Interactional justice					-0.26**
Overall F	4.83**	7.03***	0.33	1.89	2.93*
R^2	0.06	0.14	0.01	0.03	0.06
ΔF		12.63***		6.69**	6.49**
ΔR^2		0.05		0.02	0.02

*$p < 0.05$.
**$p < 0.01$.
***$p < 0.001$.

Table 3

Hierarchical regression results for moderated mediation

Variables	Interactional justice				Defensive silence				
	Mod	Model	Mode	Mode	Mod	Mode	Mode	Mod	Mod
Age	-0.06	-0.03	-0.02	-0.02	0.06	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.02
Gender	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.03	-0.07	-0.06	-0.05	-0.03	-0.01
Leader		-0.23**	-	-0.15*		0.34**	0.30**	0.26**	0.09
Value			0.23**	0.21**			-	-	-
LN*VC				-				-	-0.19*
Interaction									-
Overall F	4.83**	7.03***	5.93**	5.13**	0.33	1.89	1.66	1.78	2.13*
R^2	0.06	0.14	0.16	0.18	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.07	0.09
ΔF		12.63**	3.13*	2.66		6.69**	0.49	2.96	4.96*
ΔR^2		0.05	0.03	0.02		0.02	0.01	0.03	0.02

*$p < 0.05$.
**$p < 0.01$.
***$p < 0.001$.

Table 4.

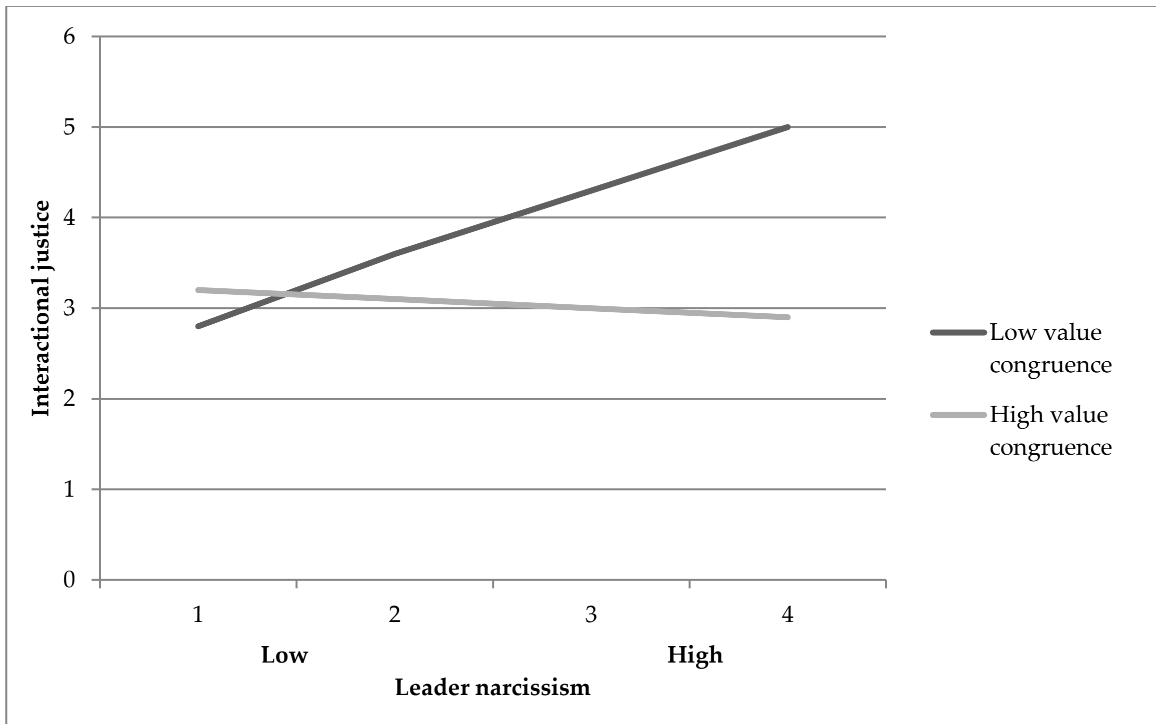
Moderated mediation results for defensive silence across levels of value congruence.

		Defensive silence			
Moderator	Level	Conditional indirect effect	SE	LL 95% CI	UL 95% CI
Value congruence	Low (-0.93)	−0.06	0.03	−0.09	−0.01
	High (0.93)	−0.00	0.02	−0.04	0.03

Note. LL= lower limit; CI = confidence interval; UL =upper limit.

Figure 2.

Interaction of leader narcissism and value congruence on interactional justice



Discussion

We investigated the relationship between leader's (department chairs) narcissism and followers' (faculty members) defensive silence of universities in Turkey. Data from our sample supported the initial hypotheses. Results displayed that leader's narcissism is positively associated with followers' silence and negatively associated with interactional justice. Furthermore, interactional justice provided an explanation of the relationship between leader's narcissism and defensive silence. Moreover, leader-follower value congruence effectively buffered the negative relationship between interactional justice and defensive silence.

Theoretical Contribution

This study expands narcissism literature by adding a substantial mediator to explain how leader narcissism causes the defensive silence of the employees. It provides an insight into the importance of interactional justice as a psychological conduit in which narcissist leaders encourage employees to hold out relevant ideas, information or opinions as a kind of fear-based self-protection. Further, interactional justice is actually a generalized causal mechanism for worsening or improving organizational efficiency through different types of behavioral options, such as organizational cynicism or citizenship behavior. This study identifies interactional justice as a psychological pathway that relates to employees ' behavioral choices and enables future research to identify interventions which may ultimately be effective in reducing workplace silence.

Moreover, this study linked two conventionally independent research areas, leader's narcissism, and employee silence, thereby

checking new possibilities for enhancing the development of each field. Among the many negative consequences of leader's narcissism to an organization, employee silence is among the most serious. Employees of highly narcissistic leader perceive that the latter is generally arrogant, emotionally isolated, distrustful, without empathy, sensitive to criticism, exploiting, unfairly treating their followers and lacking ethical values (Naseer et al., 2016). Those leadership traits are obviously associated with difficulties in interpersonal associations, which, subsequently, result in low trust in leader, leader-member-exchange quality, interactional justice and high defensive silence (Xu et al., 2015). This finding places leader narcissism as one important precedent to employee workplace silence.

Another essential contribution of the study rests on the role of interactional justice mainly because a mediator of the link between narcissistic leadership and employee silence. Usually, the negative consequences of interactional justice have been limited to trust in supervisor, turnover intentions and workplace deviance (Aryee et al., 2002). We now have expanded this to add the employee silence.

This study adds to the literature by studying the moderating role of value congruence, given the call for the extension of the criterion domain to include the interpersonal antecedents of employee silence (e.g., Tangirala and Ramanujam, 2008).

The moderated mediation model that applied the theory of social exchange (Blau, 1964) to define the mediation path could be a notable consequence of this research. This model provided a theoretical framework on how an independent variable (such as leader narcissism) can relate to the dependent variable (defensive silence) via the mediator (interactional justice). As for the moderator,

the mediating role of interactional justice on the indirect relationship between leader narcissism and employee silence was moderated by value congruence. Low degrees of congruence in value increased interactional justice's mediating role.

Managerial Implications

The study results are consistent with previous research (Grijalva and Harms, 2014; Naseer et al., 2016) that leader narcissism has negative outcomes for employees such as low job satisfaction and commitment, as well as high organizational cynicism, turnover intention and silence in the workplace. Similarly, this study has significant implications for the management of higher education. The results emphasize the importance of leader narcissism since it is positively associated with employee silence. Narcissistic leaders tend to exploit others, have lower quality relationships (Rosenthal and Pittinsky, 2006), and take brief cuts or behave in unethical ways (Campbell et al., 2011). In terms of implications for organizations, these results indicate the necessity for reinforcing an ethical context as well regarding the dependence on leader selection. In particular, it is important to maintain an ethical context in order to ensure that narcissistic leaders usually do not thrive in organizations. If the context is unethical, behaviors will most likely be more prominent and evaluated by employees even more negatively. Thus, in a highly ethical context, it truly is improbable that narcissistic leaders will become successful in advancing (Campbell et al., 2011).

The results recommend that interactional justice acts as a link between the leader's narcissism and employee silence. In general, employees consider managers who behave in a disrespectful and abusive way as a burden. However, employees do not necessarily react or speak up with their manager, also if (s)he behaves abusively

(Tepper, 2007). Employees, who perceive interactional justice, think that they have been treated with dignity and respect, have trust their leader and have a tendency to show less negative relationships when met with a narcissistic leader. Indeed, interactional justice seems to be a mediator on followers' negative reactions to narcissistic leadership. Thereby, organizations, in the interests of buffering the experience of interactional injustice, should provide additional support and resources-based measures. For example, organizations can provide victims with psychological consultation, focusing on their voice tone. In addition, employers can apply for the health enhancement program from time to time to recognize their employees ' health status.

Given the objective of reducing stress in the workplace, it is generally a starting point for the look of preventive interventions to recognize a state of perceived leader narcissism. For example, if perceived narcissistic leadership is undoubtedly a factor that creates low interactional justice, human resources specialists could include supporting leadership styles such as transformational, servant, ethical or authentic leadership behaviors in management training curricula. Based on the goal of improving the management of existing low degree of justice, identifying leader narcissism as a factor of low interactional justice may benefit counseling and employee support initiatives. These activities can help employees, for instance, to identify situations that lead to narcissistic behavior as a contributing component to poor justice. Employees could therefore probably learn how to handle their feelings of narcissism perceived.

Our research showed that low-value congruence increases the negative relationship of the leader's narcissism on interactional justice. Managers should pay more focus on the buffering role of

value congruence specifically for employees having low interactional justice and displaying workplace silence. This study shows that managers should design an environment where employees and supervisors work towards common values and their organizations, with a priority to reduce silence. The existence of value congruence offers a fertile basis for creating an even more committed workforce that reduces the opportunity for employees to choose activities that contradict their organization's interests. A culture that embraces supportive leadership such as ethical, transformational, servant or authentic leadership could be instrumental in this respect, as supportive leaders tend to effectively align the interests of followers with the organization's interests (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2018; Stone et al., 2004). Alternatively, organizations should be aware that whenever the values of employees and managers are unique, the uncertainty produced and insufficient control may prompt employees to pursue activities that only fulfill their personal passions, even if these activities may harm their employing organization. On an even more general level, top management should stimulate their employee base across hierarchical ranks to completely disappear from looking through a self-interested lens at their personal goal setting. They must instead motivate their employees to see themselves and their supervisors as ' partners ' sharing a set of shared values and interests with the primary goal of helping the organization to achieve its objectives (De Clercq et al. 2014).

Educational organizations need the input of comments and suggestions from employees in a complex, diverse, and competitive work environment to tackle and solve critical problems and problems and minimize job-relating silence (e.g., Detert and Burris, 2007, Morrison and Milliken, 2000, Ryan and Oestreich, 1998). It has therefore become important for educational administrators to

understand the antecedents and conditions that allow employees to conduct themselves in silence and not to express their concerns and opinions on the situation at work (Van Dyne et al., 2003).

Limitations and Future Research

One limitation of the scholarly study is that our sample was only taken from universities in Turkey, so external validity is a problem. Another limitation stems from cross-sectional data since no causal relationship can be established only without longitudinal studies. In addition, the use of a self-assessment scale can likely maintain a bias in social desirability, as individuals tend to provide socially desirable responses instead of selecting responses that reflect their exact feelings.

Future research could possibly be carried out to address the limitations of this study. We call for empirical research into the relationship between leading narcissism and follower silence based on samples from universities running in different other economies. Since consensus can only be achieved by gathering evidence from an even more representative combination of samples, we are presenting the existing results as a basis for further research. Dealing with longitudinal research will be much more important in examining how the changes in the narcissism of the leader relate to silence in the workplace. In addition, potential research on narcissistic leadership could benefit from focusing on the role of context in reducing or exacerbating the influence of such leadership styles on organizational outcomes. In line with Johns ' (2006) admonition of the need to recognize and add the effect of context in research, we argue that situational factors such as perceived organizational politics or organizational culture can significantly relate to employee behavior.

Our results recommend that organizations should focus on leader narcissism due to its detrimental results. This is not only relevant when filling leadership positions, but also when dealing with the organization's existing leaders. Existing leaders should actually notice the effect their personality could have on employees. Furthermore, they need to find out on several effective leadership styles (e.g., transformational or authentic leadership) primarily because a compensation for the potential unfavorable effects of the Dark Triad traits (i.e., narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism). As narcissism research continues to develop in organizational contexts, we hope that our research can stimulate further research into the role of contextual factors in the relationship between narcissism and silence.

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Book Review

Gender Justice, Education and Equality: Creating Capabilities for Girls' and Women's Development

By: Firdevs Melis Cin

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Book Review

Education is a basic human right; "everyone has the right education" as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognised in 1948 (UNESCO, 2007). However, many girls and women cannot access education due to persistent gender bias and inequalities in societies (UNESCO, 2014). As Cin (2017) highlights in her book, around the world, approximately "65 million girls are not schooled and two-thirds of the world's 774 million illiterate are female" (p.3). Even though it is well-known that access to a quality of education helps to eliminate gender bias and patriarchal values that exist in societies, most of the current educational systems across the world reflect and reproduce gender inequalities and prejudices. More

importantly, and not surprisingly, the ideologies of individuals and governments in power do not challenge the social status quo (Cin 2017; Stromquist, 1995).

This timely publication Gender Justice, Education and Equality: Creating Capabilities for Girls' and Women's Development explores how education can reproduce some of the existing gender equalities and at the same time be transformative and distribute justice in women's private and public lives. The book gives a voice to three different generations of women teachers in Turkey while discussing their experiences through a Capabilities framework. The author's story like style makes the readers engage deeply with these women's experiences and understands "the cycle of reproduced gender inequalities" within the Turkish society.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The first two chapters conceptualise gender justice and introduce the readers to the Capabilities Approach (CA). The author utilises the Capabilities Approach, which was developed by Amartya Sen (1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2000), to address these three-generation teachers' individual experiences concerning wider societal, cultural and educational issues. The third chapter of the book focuses on Turkish political history while describing the multiple layers of gender and educational politics in Turkey. The author's description of the history and politics of Turkey in this chapter allows readers to understand the journey that her research participants have lived through. Chapter Four, which I believe is the heart of this book, introduces the readers the three generations of women; Republican Women, Amazon Women and Postmodern Women. The readers learn about the women's life stories, struggles and limitations due to being a woman in Turkey. All these stories offer commonalities within the periods they live in which

again help readers to conceptualise the participants' lives. Chapter Four also illustrates the data collection and analysis process. The following three Chapters reveal the participants' narratives from private, educational and professional perspectives. The final chapter, drawing from the narratives of the women, discusses how gender justice in Turkey is actually a result of a patriarchal mindset rather than a lack of policy or legal provisions.

The strength of the book is that it depicts a realistic picture of the participants' experiences in their private and public spheres and discusses issues regarding gender roles both within their families and professions. What is significant about these women's personal lives is that, as the author herself describes, their family lives "present an understanding of how the gender perceptions and gender norms established by their families started to 'haunt' their lives by setting limits to their freedoms and opportunities at an early age" (p.90). When it comes to their professional and educational lives, these women value education and believe that they need to secure their range of "physical, social, economic and intellectual capability sets and strengthen their agency" for them to have better futures (p.121). Notably, whichever generation the participants might have been raised in they strongly believed that the education they receive would empower them. Learning about the women teachers' compulsory teaching posts in rural areas of Western Turkey and Eastern Turkey portrays a vivid picture of socio-economic and political issues in Turkey. The reflections from these three-generation women; allow the reader to appreciate what it means to be a woman teacher in Turkish society.

While focusing on the case of Turkey, which could be initially observed as a limitation, this publication actually contributes to gender

issues in a broader arena and it is universal enough to be used as a textbook with university students in different countries. One especially noteworthy feature of this book is its use of the Capabilities Approach; inspired by Nussbaum's list of capabilities, the author created her own list of capabilities and applied this list to the participants' lives (p.178). Considering that the CA has generated considerable interest in recent years, this book is particularly a significant contribution to the field. In all, the book is an excellent one; clearly written and reads like a story that engages the reader from the first page of the book.

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